

Golf Ryder Cup

Europe cling on for a delirious victory

David Davies at Valderrama

FOR the fifth time in the last seven matches the cup has come home. Despite a comeback of heroic proportions by the American side, who took the concluding singles series 8-4, they had been so thoroughly outplayed over the first two days that they had left themselves with too much to do.

Europe, leading by five points after the fourballs and foursomes, eventually won by a single point, 14½-13½, and Valderrama was the scene of some determined, not to say prolonged, celebrations.

Suitably it was one of their great stalwarts, Bernhard Langer, who secured the half-point to take his side to 14, the mark at which the cup was retained. He did so at the dramatic 17th hole and immediately the huge crowd covering the massive mound at the back of the green went berserk. "Seve, Seve, Seve", they sang and, as Jose Maria Olazábal had just passed through, "Ole-ee, Ole-ee, Ole-ee" as well. Or was it "Ole, ole, ole"?

Banners were unfurled — "Seve is the Greatest", naturally — the Swedish, Italian and German flags were prominent and six Swedes, in blue Viking helmets with yellow horns and the letters E U R O P E on their respective T-shirts, leapt up and down like a demented Scrabble line.

And talking demented, Billy Foster, the caddy nowadays to Darren Clarke but formerly for Severiano Ballesteros, jumped into the lake which the Spanish captain had built



Reign in Spain... Europe's golfers celebrate their dramatic victory

PHOTOGRAPH: REBECCA NADEN

on this controversial hole and swam around like a toy yacht whose radio control has gone haywire.

The celebrations were a little premature, given that there were still two matches on the course, but they were wholly understandable. As the Americans played superbly in the main, the tension was almost tangible and, as at Muirfield Village in 1987, when Europe led by the same margin after the team matches, 10½-5½, it was not always easy to see where the winning points were to come from.

Europe were, for example, given the worst possible start when Ian Woosnam was rapidly four down after six to Fred Couples and was beaten 8 & 7 in just over two hours.

Things like that tend to filter down the order but Europe's next two did a superb rot-stopping operation. Per-Ulrik Johansson had been given only one match before last Sunday but he was two under par against Davis Love III. Love opened with a 22-footer for a birdie at the 1st, Johansson replied with one of the same length to win.

If there was a hero of the early order, though, it was Costantino Rocca. The Italian has matured immensely since The Belfry in 1993, when he three-putted the 17th from 15 feet when two putts would have won him his match; so much so that the wunderkind Tiger Woods did not get a look-in. Woods claimed only 1½ points from five matches here, a continuation of his poor team form of Royal Portcharl in the Walker Cup, which the Americans also lost.

Rocca was two under and three up after five, a lead he never lost, although it seemed likely he might at the 16th after driving into the trees. But he manufactured a spectacular recovery round a cork tree and on to the green, and with a bogey from Woods — he was two over for the match — Rocca was home and Europe needed 1½ points from the remaining nine matches.

An unlikely point came from Thomas Bjorn, not because the Dane is not a good player — potentially he is a great one — but because he lost the first four holes to an inspired Justin Leonard. But he clipped away at that lead and his back nine makes amazing reading. Bjorn levelled at the 10th, and in successive holes from there was one down, level, one down, level, one down, level, one up and then level again.

The winning point could have come from Olazábal, two up and three to play against Lee Janzen. But the Spaniard had previously played four Ryder Cup singles, they had all gone to the 18th and he had lost three of them. Last Sunday he lost another. Janzen birdied the 17th and 18th, so giving his team just a glimmer of hope.

Langer, however, extinguished that. Two up playing the 17th

against Brad Faxon he was in a rough after two shots, with Faxon on the green 13 feet away in three. But the German played a magnificent shot to 10 feet and, when the American missed, had two putts to retain the cup. He took them.

Europe then had to find someone to turn a tie into a win and it turned out to be Colin Montgomerie. Playing Scott Hoch and needing a half point, Monty secured his par four at the 18th and, with Hoch 20 feet away in three, offered him a halcyon match. Hoch accepted with alacrity.

First thing in the morning, Olazábal and Rocca ran away with the last delayed foursomes match with six under par after 14 holes being far too good for Couples and Love, and the Spaniard wrapped up with a 25-foot birdie putt at the 14th.

In fact the morning drama was concentrated on the Partridge-Rodrigo v Leonard-Woods match as it went down to the last two holes square. Over the last seven contests Europe have had much the better matches that had reached that stage.

Europe's victory seemed a long way from the dawn thunderstorm, last Friday which delayed the start of play by 100 minutes. With 16 foursomes matches still out on course, bad light denied the spectators a fantastic first day. Europe's United States halved the morning fourball matches 2-2 and shared the completed foursomes matches 1-1 in the afternoon.

On Saturday, play to complete the head-over-head foursomes began only 50 minutes late and it did so with a crockie Lee Westwood standing on an eight-foot birdie putt at the 16th that Nick Faldo had laid on for the previous evening. The Europeans were two up with three to play. Before putting, he watched British Open champion Leonard to hole his birdie putt from 25 feet and fall; then, 14½ hours after Faldo hit the shot that gave him the job, Westwood struck it. The ball was 4½ ways on track, always looked good and was.

Faldo, historically not an especially good team man, said: "I've got a great team, as we all know, it's important in foursomes." The point he earned in that match enabled him to become the most prolific scorer in Ryder Cup history, with 24, overtaking the 23½ of Billy Casper. Faldo achieved his mark in 43 attempts while it took Casper only 37. But the American was playing at a time when the US was almost automatically and Faldo's was substantially the more significant achievement.

The Europeans, having gained one-and-a-half points out of two from the delayed first-day foursomes then won three-and-a-half of the four fourball matches for a lead at the time of 8-4, and by the end of a day when the ball ran for them, they went five points clear when, in the only foursomes match of the second series to finish, Montgomerie and Langer beat Janzen and Jim Furyk by 1 hole.

El Capitán to drop the reins

IN THE aftermath of his great triumph, Europe's team captain, Severiano Ballesteros, announced that he would not be captain of the 1999 Ryder Cup side to play the Americans in Boston. "I want to recover my game," he said. "I want to play against the Americans again. I

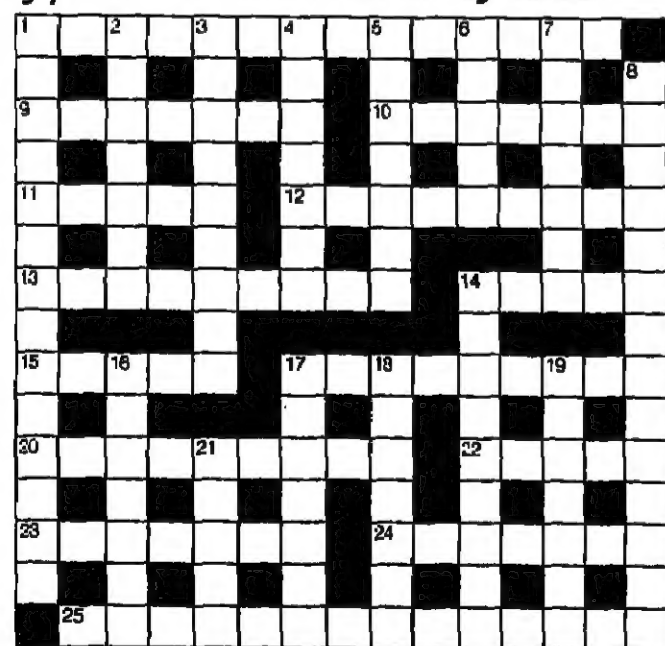
would like to be captain again sometime, perhaps in 2005 when the match is in Ireland." For the immediate future, Sam Torrance emerged as the front runner to take over the job. If he takes over, Ballesteros certainly provided him with a tough act to follow.

Last week's solution

DOWN

1 It might be called final end of

Cryptic crossword by Shed



Across

- Short note of death on the road — question and make statement (14)
- Singer carrying weapon is the winning type (7)
- Old composer and princess in Bury (7)
- Ladies almost moved by vision (5)
- 'New Tony' outflanks Conservatives with no end of a bad name (9)
- Have guests come in backwards at home (9)
- About to revise convictions (5)

Down

- Hanky-parkey in the corner's unknown (5)
- Science in space leads Scotsman to Irish county (9)
- Make Gallic cook embracing chief in confusion... (9)
- ... burn outside of pig's head on skewer (5)
- Pin securing alias on point of escape (7)
- Returning 101 to Amin? — that's stupid! (7)
- 1 down attending 8? (5,2,3,4)

- Empire (7,3,4)
- Supremely stingy compiler acquires a home (7)
- Poor Mary is ill likewise (9)
- Shakespearean daughter's mother accepting one goldfield (7)
- Calm at the lee-off, interrupting one of five (7)
- Snake or its headless converse (5)
- Taken to the limit during sex? Tremendous! (7)
- Track events, exceptionally horny, due to feature in classical trio (9,5)
- Two-way bombardment of KKK emblem (9)
- Seasoning Shakespearean daughter between rounds (7)
- Miner's alternative garb (7)
- Polished writer's catalogue of slurs (7)
- West's remnant picked up by conductor (7)
- Feature without a series (5)

Across

1 SHORTLY DIED ON THE ROAD — QUESTION AND MAKE STATEMENT (14)

2 SINGER CARRYING WEAPON IS THE WINNING TYPE (7)

3 OLD COMPOSER AND PRINCESS IN BURY (7)

4 LADIES ALMOST MOVED BY VISION (5)

5 'NEW TONY' OUTFLANKS CONSERVATIVES WITH NO END OF A BAD NAME (9)

6 HAVE GUESTS COME IN BACKWARDS AT HOME (9)

7 ABOUT TO REVISE CONVICTIONS (5)

Vol 157, No 15
Week ending October 12, 1997

New Russia enjoys its first Blair-hug

REVOLUTION Square was the Great Leader's first Moscow metro station. On Monday, it was the first for Tony Blair too, writes James Meek in Moscow.

A huge entourage followed Mr Blair down into the sombre grandeur of the underground station, built by Josef Stalin in 1938 and decorated with heavy, dark-bronze sculptures of workers, mothers and sportsmen.

A black-leather-jacketed special police squad held surprised commuters at bay, forcing the British prime minister to wheel sharply to find ordinary people to shake hands with.

"There's so many people around it's hard to get to see any people," he muttered.

The train carriage that Mr Blair and his retinue squeezed aboard for a two-stop ride was decorated with an English poem — part of a British Council-sponsored programme. The Russians were said to have chosen this Roger McGough poem for Mr Blair on British advice.

"I wanna be the leader I wanna be the leader/Can I be the leader? Can I? I can't/Promise? Promise? Yippee. I'm the leader/OK, what shall we do?"

Mr Blair has set as his goal the building of a friendly personal relationship with the Russian leader, and that means a demonstrative bear-hug — or in this case, a Blair-hug, which is when Boris Yeltsin's embrace is preceded by a quick handshake from the British side.

Russian male leaders tend not to kiss on their first few dates. But judging by the effusiveness of the Russian president's comments about the Prime Minister, which could have been scripted by Downing Street, the two men may have graduated to kissing.

"I love young, clever people," said the Russian leader, clasping Mr Blair. "Here we have Britain's youngest prime minister, an interesting, trusting, energetic politician — someone with enormous support in the UK and within the Labour party."

Mr Blair's last best chance to reach out to the Russian people was his cameo role in the British-financed Russian radio soap House 7, Entrance 4, which he recorded in rainy weather in a hut on stilts behind the British embassy.

It took a rehearsal and two attempts to get it right. But he delivered his only line in Russian with gusto, translating his famous mantra of priorities — education, education and education — into a flawless "Образование, образование, образование."

Labour conference, page 10

Israel smarts at botched murder plot

Julian Borger in Gaza

THE Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was fighting to retain his grip on power this week amid a firestorm of criticism at home, as tens of thousands of Palestinians celebrated the return to Gaza of Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, the radical Islamist cleric freed from jail as a result of a botched Israeli assassination plot.

After calls for his resignation, Mr Netanyahu held a press conference to explain how a murder plot in Amman last week carried out by Mossad, Israel's secret service, had rebounded so badly that Israel was forced to release the guru of Hamas's armed struggle and scores of other prisoners, uniting Palestinians — at least for a day.

Announcing a three-member committee of inquiry into the failed assassination, Mr Netanyahu said: "Sometimes, as in every war, we have mishaps and we have failures... The responsibility for this war is in the end mine." But he added: "We don't abandon our fighters. I think Hamas would be mistaken if it sees this setback as a change in our resolve to fight terrorism."

Israel's opposition leader, Ehud Barak, said the committee — which includes the former Mossad chief Nahum Admoni — would be powerless, and what was needed was a full state commission.

Mr Netanyahu's colleagues had appeared to distance themselves from the debacle. The public security minister, Avigdor Kahalani, said the affair was riddled with "technical problems, tactical problems, and maybe national problems".

Israel's embarrassment was heightened by the release on Monday of some 20 more Arab political prisoners, and the news that up to 50 would be freed in the next week as part of a prisoner-exchange deal. In return, Jordan released two



Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, centre, and Mossad's intended victim, Khaled Meehal, right, at an Amman news conference

PHOTOGRAPH: ALI JAREKI

Mossad agents involved in the plot to kill Khaled Meehal, an exiled Hamas leader in Amman.

Yossi Alpher of the American Jewish Committee, an expert on Israel's intelligence services, said: "There is a growing feeling in public that this government just can't get it right. It just goes from screw-up to screw-up," he said.

Meanwhile in Gaza, Palestinians

revelled in triumph. As a Jordanian army helicopter carrying Sheikh Yassin touched down, the welcoming party of dignitaries surged forwards, eager to touch a man who has assumed mythic proportions in the 10 years since he founded Hamas as a militant Islamic alternative to the secular Palestine Liberation Organisation.

Some had predicted the home-

coming would be like Ayatollah Khomeini's 1979 return to Tehran, but there were moments when it was more reminiscent of the ayatollah's chaotic burial, as the frail, paralysed shaykh was buffeted by the crowd.

The PLO-Hamas divide was not bridged, but it was papered over. Yasser Arafat, president of the Palestinian Authority, was absent, pleading other engagements. But his wife Suha was at the helipad beside Sheikh Yassin's wife.

"This is a new start for unity. I hope my husband will soon be under less pressure and will be able to free more prisoners," Mrs Arafat said, underlining the irony that as Israel releases prisoners, hundreds of Hamas members remain locked up in Palestinian jails.

It is unclear what Sheikh Yassin's return will bode for Mr Arafat's authority. At a press conference in Amman, the sheikh appeared to contradict reports that Hamas had offered a moratorium on suicide-bomb attacks on Israeli civilian targets. He said: "There will be no halt to armed operations until the end of the occupation."

But at his home, his half-brother Mohammed said the sheikh would back a truce as soon as Israel implemented the Oslo accords. "He said: 'They have to respect what they have agreed... and then we will give them peace'."

The United States envoy, Dennis Ross, said after talks with the Israeli foreign minister, David Levy, and Mr Arafat's deputy, Mahmoud Abbas, that Israeli-Palestinian committees suspended for seven months, would resume work on Tuesday. Canada recalled its ambassador to Israel last week after it was revealed that the two Mossad agents had used forged Canadian passports on their mission to Jordan.

Comment, page 14

Winchester voters must go back to the polls

Michael White

THE British High Court set the scene for one of the most intriguing by-elections in recent memory when it ruled on Monday that Mark Oaten, the Liberal Democrat MP for Winchester, must re-fight the former Tory health minister, Gerry Malone, for the seat he won by two votes on May 1.

With 3,000 votes of six fringe candidates up for grabs — 2,000 of which went to Eurosceptic Tory candidates in the general election — electoral logic points to victory for Mr Malone.

He said the court ruling showed that "we won the election and there will now be a re-election and I look forward to that with relief and enthusiasm."

Mr Malone was adopted by local Tories in 1992 after the election of their MP, John Browne, an early ca-

suality of the backlash against eleze. Mr Oaten, a 33-year-old PR executive, who did not oppose Mr Malone's application to nullify the result, said after the hearing: "We got what we wanted from the court today. Gerry Malone had asked the court to hand the Winchester constituency over to him. But the judges have said that it has to go back to the people of Winchester."

Labour, whose candidate came a poor third with 10 per cent of the vote, has not yet decided how to play it. On balance, it is expected to run again — rather than risk charges of Lib-Lab collusion — but not to try too hard.

The interaction between national and local politics will be heightened by the role of Richard Huggett, who took 840 votes as a Liberal Democrat Top Choice for Parliament candidate on May 1. It was not clear if he would stand again. In 1992, his

10,000 votes as a "Liberal Democrat" cost the Lib Dems the Devon and Plymouth East European parliamentary seat, which they lost by 700. The High Court ruled that his spoiler was within the law.

Months of legal wrangling ended when Lord Justice Brooke ruled that the May 1 result was void because 55 ballot papers had been found to be without the necessary perforated mark made at the polling station. Had this error not been made by election staff, Mr Malone would have won by two instead of Mr Oaten, it was decided — the first time such a result has been overturned in this way since 1910.

By any test, prosperous Winchester is a safe Tory seat, but the Lib Dems claim that Mr Malone, a smooth-talking politician's politician who was Stephen Dorrell's street-smart deputy at Health, is not popular on the doorstep.

Vichy regime goes on trial

Global warming debate hots up

The tribe that defied oil giants

French philosophy 'load of old tosh'

Che, the doomed revolutionary

Austria	AS90	Malta	60c
Belgium	BF20	Netherlands	G 5
Denmark	DK10	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM 10	Portugal	E300
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.00
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 600	Sweden	SK 100
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.00

Green plans that need a darker hue of red

MUCH as I would like to agree with many of the sentiments expressed by Larry Elliott (A green light that signals stop, not go, September 28th), I cannot accept his apparent conclusion that voters will elect a global red-green alliance that will halt the capitalistic train's headlong rush to self-destruction.

France is currently governed by a red-green alliance facing awkward questions between economic development (ie, jobs) and the environment. The Super Phoenix fast breeder reactor is to be scrapped for environmental reasons, in spite of job losses, but the Communist transport minister has decided that Charles de Gaulle airport needs additional runways, in spite of the impact on the environment.

And many French people seem to believe that they can detach their carriage from the global express, and keep it in a nice calm siding, where they will continue to enjoy the current high standard of living, well protected from the horrors of the outside world. These people have just enabled the National Front to win another election.

If we are to have a global alliance, it would be pointless without the United States, which, in spite of the low standard of living of many people, shows no signs of looking for a coherent political alternative. In the last presidential election, the blue-collar protest vote went to Pat Buchanan in the early primaries, while the Democrats, supposedly the more leftwing of the two US parties, seem to believe in the virtues of free global trade — at least as long as US economic muscle powers the global train.

The process of globalisation began centuries ago, as the

Mediterranean became a vast free-trade area, creating wealth, for example, for the Cretan Minoan empire.

A mixture of greed, technical innovation and the courage of the early explorers have pushed European ideas of trade and industry to all corners of the globe. We now realise that the process we started cannot continue, that global resources are insufficient for every family in the world to own a car. But are we Europeans well placed to tell the Chinese this, quoting Gandhi in the process?

This message would only have any value if we showed we were willing to reduce our share of world resources, ie, reduce our standard of living so others can catch up and eventually we all share a sustainable happy medium. Who, in Europe or the US, is going to vote for a political party that proposes this?

Charles Wilson,
Eysines, France

IWOULD like to add a codicil to Larry Elliott's article on globalisation. The pundits blithely refer to globalisation doing this, market forces doing that and the economy doing something else — as if they could effect anything or affect us in any way. The bad news is that those jargon-phrases cannot do anything. It is people, particularly the greedies, who facilitate market forces, drive the economy and bring about globalisation — thus impinging upon us ordinary people's way of life to our detriment, while achieving their selfish, usually short-term, goals.

Robin H Griffin,
Auckland, New Zealand

Rethinking Kenyan ties

CHRIS MCGREAL'S report (Killers boost Moi's poll prospects, September 21) on the violence in Kenya in the run-up to this year's elections makes sad reading. But while McGreal's report hints darkly that the violence may be orchestrated by President Daniel arap Moi's disgraced regime, consolidating his own electoral interests even as he disowns such violence, it says nothing about the tacit forms of support given to him by the West, which allows him to think — rightly as it turns out — that he can act with economic and diplomatic impunity.

This omission is all the more striking given the short piece at the end of McGreal's report, which says that Amnesty International has urged its members to put pressure on their governments to force Kenya to end years of human rights abuses.

Surely it is time to reconsider the ties that bind the Kenyan regime and a variety of British interests. Far from seeing Moi as a rogue dictator, many in Kenya see their repressive government as the de facto representative of Western interests, without the continued support of which it couldn't survive.

As the evidence against Moi mounts, Britain continues to give huge amounts of aid to the Kenyan regime in various forms — in spite of massive internal corruption and the growing realisation that such aid rarely finds its way down to the people.

Nick Frankel,
Richmond, Virginia, USA

SOME months ago you reported that Executive Outcomes, who supply military "advisers" to regimes in developing countries in return for a slice of the country's economic resources, had supplied Paul Moi, son of the Kenyan president, with some men.

It would be interesting to know if there is any link between the alleged training camps for groups terrorising upcountry Kenyans into leaving Coast province, and thus possibly swaying elections in the president's favour, and the men employed by Paul Moi.

Elizabeth Allen,
Chipping Norton, Oxfordshire

NZ performance doesn't add up

SO BRITAIN'S Liberal Democrats "want New Zealand-style performance-related pay for ministers and senior officials, with pay cuts for failure", do they (Lib Dems unite in scorn for Labour, September 28)? Alas, if only it were so. The truth is that New Zealand cabinet ministers along with all other members of parliament, judges, and most senior executives in the public sector, have their pay set by a privileged system of relatives that has been long abolished for all other public servants, who must take their chances on the unregulated labour market.

There is no performance component in the salaries of ministers. And while there are performance payments associated with the salaries of some senior officials, the suggestion that these might be withheld in the interest of concentrating minds would cause bitter laughter in this country. (Perfor-

mance bonuses continue to be paid notwithstanding the most bizarre administrative failures perpetrated by their recipients.

What is more alarming is that the "reforms" effected in New Zealand can still find admirers when it is abundantly clear to all but their blindest proponents that they have signally failed to deliver consistent economic growth, employment, and productivity improvements, and that they have been a social disaster, especially in the fields of health and education. All your British readers should be praying that a Blair government does not take them down the same path.

Tony Simpson,
Wellington, New Zealand

Wrong lens on Lebanon

READING Julian Borger's piece " Hizbullah success leaves Israel in shock" (September 14), one could get the impression that Hizbullah, the Amal militia and the Lebanese army were the aggressors when they ambushed an Israeli navy unit that had come ashore (on a commando raid). Do we need to remind ourselves that Israel's occupation of southern Lebanon is still an arbitrary and aggressive act that gives Israel no territorial rights there?

Mr Borger gives us a portrait of ridiculous mourning for "guerrilla leaders and fundamentalist imams" for resistance fighters and religious leaders according to one's point of view) whom the equally ridiculous, misguided and opportunistic locals regard as their proponents.

Since no such portrait is provided of the Israelis, are we permitted to ask, in the same spirit, if mourning for their dead should also be regarded as ridiculous?

Nancy Roberts,
Cairo, Egypt

Relative burden of Saudi law

WHAT appals me in the Saudi nurse's murder case is not so much the system of justice in that country, but more the attitude of Frank Gifford, brother of the murdered woman, Yvonne Gifford. The two nurses concerned were found guilty although the "evidence" against them consisted of confessions, later retracted.

In Australia, where Mr Gifford lives, their confessions alone would not have secured their conviction. I therefore fail to understand why, in the interests of ordinary humanity, he did not agree to waive his rights in this case a long time ago and ask for the death penalty to be set aside, rather than keeping Ms Parry and her family in what must be agonising suspense.

Paul M Brennoch,
Douglas, Isle of Man

IS THE sentence of 500 lashes deeply offensive to the British public? I find the fact that two nurses have been convicted of murdering a colleague and proven to have stolen from the victim after the slaying more offensive. Who are we to judge the legal system of other countries when ours has on occasion been found wanting?

Jan McLean,
Barking, Essex

Briefly

"VITAL international assistance to Haiti... continues to be held up because of delays by the government in implementing key reforms, including privatisation" (September 21). What exactly are the blessings of privatisation, which dominant nations are so keen to confer on countries such as Haiti? Is a country such as Britain you know faltering services, rising prices that hurt the poor most, shareholders' interests paramount over users' needs, pegged earnings for the workforce, and obscenely high salaries for those at the top. In Russia, privatisation has been catastrophic for most of the population. The almighty scam, of course, is that the predators will be the saviours.

Paul Winstanley,
Palmerston North, New Zealand

THE headline "New Caledonia itch for independence" (September 14) summed up the whole matter. The French have this perverse national pride that leads them to feel they can stay in a place for ever, whatever others may think. France is guilty of selfishness, not racism. But I predict that the sun will set on Paris's empire in Oceania within the foreseeable future.

William R Brown,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA

SIGNIFICANTLY, it was Carmarthenshire that eventually changed a minority Yes vote into a majority in Wales (September 28). It was this area that elected the first Plaid Cymru MP (Gwynfor Evans) in 1966. Carmarthenshire has legendary links with the seer Merlin, who, according to Geoffrey of Monmouth, made the following prophecy: "The race that is oppressed shall prevail in the end, for it will resist the savagery of the invaders".

Glyn Welden Banks,
Espoo, Finland

MOST of the artists in Sensation have in common a post-adolescent naivety in place of irony and a mistaking of dogma for personal intelligence (September 28). They have all had importance conferred on them by being collected by Charles Saatchi, who has a high public profile, loads of money and a good eye for investment — but no apparent understanding of the continuum of art.

Roland Crisp,
London

HERE'S a way to make British code of press conduct stick (October 5). Any paper that breaks it is banned from publishing photos. Editors would have to use words and only words, to convey the news. This just might lead to improvements in journalistic standards.

David Fine,
Bakewell, Derbyshire

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Croats surrender for trial

Ian Traynor in Bonn

ONE OF Bosnia's most wanted suspected war criminals, Dario Kordic, a senior Croat political leader and warlord, was behind bars in The Hague this week after surrendering with nine other Croat indictees to the International war crimes tribunal.

The surrender of the 10 Bosnian Croats, indicted mostly in connection with the murder of hundreds of Muslim civilians in central Bosnia in 1993, represented a coup for the tribunal and followed intense United States pressure on the regime of the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman.

Mr Kordic, aged 36, a protégé of the Croatian defence minister and virulent nationalist Gojko Susak, was a military commander ap-

pointed by Zagreb to head the Bosnian wing of Mr Tudjman's ruling nationalist party.

Mr Kordic and another military chief, Tihomir Blaskic, were indicted in 1995 on charges of commanding the ethnic cleansing campaign against Muslims in central Bosnia's Laska valley in 1993. He is also held responsible for some of the worst atrocities of the 42-month Bosnian war — notably the massacre of 120 Muslim civilians in the central Bosnian village of Ahmici in April 1993. British troops under the command of Colonel Bob Stewart found women and children burned alive in their cellars.

The charge sheet in The Hague says of the Ahmici massacre: "Every Muslim house in the village was burned, and many unarmed

Muslim civilians were deliberately and systematically shot... Before the attack on April 16, Muslims were 356 out of a total population of 466. After the attack no Muslims were left in the village."

The arrest of Mr Kordic, the most senior political figure to have been taken into custody, is a fillip to the teams of international prosecutors, investigators and lawyers working to bring the Balkans' most notorious figures to court.

The arrival of the 10 on Monday from the Adriatic port of Split almost doubles the number of those being held or already tried, the majority of whom are Croats.

Speaking in Paris of a "very important step", the US defence secretary, William Cohen, said the surrenders "should send a strong signal" that

war criminals in the former Yugoslavia must be brought to justice.

But there is a glaring contrast between Croats and Serbian cooperation with the tribunal — 57 of the 78 people known to be indicted are Serbs. Prosecutors also have a secret list of indictees.

The most wanted men, the Bosnian Serb political and military chiefs Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, remain defiantly at large and the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic, spurns co-operation with the tribunal.

Before the surrender of Mr Kordic's group, there were arguments and negotiations over the speediness of their trials. The tribunal has only one courtroom, is short of funds, and is hard-pressed to accommodate all those in custody.

The Kordic case could shed light on the close links between the Zagreb regime and its proxies in Bosnia.

The Week

IN an emotional ceremony at the former second world war deportation camp at Drancy, north of Paris, France's Roman Catholic bishops apologised to Jews for the Church's complicity in 73,000 Holocaust deaths.

Le Monde, page 22

HUNDREDS of thousands of Christian men, known as Promise Keepers, took part in a quest for spiritual renewal, praying and singing among the monuments of Washington.

Washington Post, page 15

THE US announced it had sent the aircraft carrier Nimitz to the Gulf four days earlier than scheduled in response to an Iranian bombing raid on bases of the anti-Tehran opposition movement, the Mujahideen Khalq, in southeastern Iraq.

ALGERIAN newspapers said that more than 60 civilians were killed in new massacres and that government troops had killed 40 Muslim rebels.

SOUTH Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission said it had ordered the former president, P W Botha, to testify on his government's strategy to quell black resistance during apartheid.

NICK SHERRY, an Australian Labour politician bitterly attacked by the government for his travel claims, was taken to hospital after trying to commit suicide by slashing his wrists. He was said to be in a stable condition in a Canberra hospital.

HUMAN Rights Watch, a US-based group, called on Saudi Arabia — which has publicly beheaded 115 people this year — to halt all executions. Meanwhile UK firms have lodged nearly \$1.2 million in an Australian bank to pay for the death penalty waiver of a British nurse charged with murder.

FATHER Tissa Balasuriya, the Sri Lankan Catholic theologian excommunicated by the Vatican in January for alleged heresy, has been denied a visa to visit Italy.

BIZARRE and sadistic initiation rites forced on new college students and tolerated for generations as innocent fun have been banned by the French government following a long and vocal campaign by parents and social workers.

THE US space shuttle Atlantis landed in Florida, ending the 145-day orbit of astronaut Michael Smith, who was aboard the Russian Mir space station.

QUEEN Elizabeth II arrived in Islamabad on a visit to help Pakistan and India celebrate 50 years of independence from British rule.

Dark cloud descends on Jakarta

John Aglionby in Jakarta

THE smog that is enveloping much of Southeast Asia swept into the Indonesian capital Jakarta for the first time on Friday last week as the government revoked the permits of 29 of the companies it believes started the fires that have caused the haze.

The companies, none of them named, are among the 68 that failed to submit reports rebutting accusations that they had started fires. They will fall foul of the first major Indonesian government action against the timber and plantation barons accused of setting alight up to 1.5 million acres of forest, plantation and scrubland.

Blown by easterly winds, the smoke from fires in east and central Java cast a depressing pall for several hours over the Jakarta skyscrapers before the sun burnt it away late in the afternoon. Meteorologists predict that the capital will be affected for at least two weeks.

Most ministers are refusing to accept responsibility for the fires and haze. Last week they banned a protest march by the country's leading environmental group, the Indonesian Environmental Forum, which is critical of the way the crisis is being handled.

International efforts to extinguish the fires were stepped up when the United Nations increased the size of its disaster team in Indonesia from four to seven people. But the UN said there was little sign of an end to the smog, which is also blighting Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore.

Gerard Kramer, the leader of the UN disaster relief team, said more experts had been called in because the problem was bigger than originally thought. "This is because peat fires are intensifying and, as some of the peat beds are up to 10 metres deep, they are very difficult to put out," he said.

A Western satellite-image analyst estimated that up to 10,000 hotspots were still being detected across Indonesia every day. While many of the fires have been burning for some time, it was also clear that new ones were starting every day, he said.

Amazon fire, page 5



Serbian riot police beat protesters in the region of Kosovo last week. Some 20,000 ethnic Albanian students were peacefully demonstrating for access to Pristina university when police waded into the crowd using tear-gas and clubs. Dozens of protesters were injured. PHOTOGRAPH: GORAN TOMASEVIC

Boycott threatens Serbian election

Karen Coleman in Belgrade and agencies

INDEPENDENT election monitors said the turnout in the second round of Serbia's presidential election last Sunday failed to exceed the 50 per cent threshold needed for a valid result.

The Centre for Free Elections and Democracy said less than half of the 7.2 million electorate had voted. If confirmed by the election commission, the figures mean that neither the Socialist candidate, Zoran Djindjic — the nominee of the Yugoslav president, Slobodan Milosevic — nor his ultra-nationalist challenger, Vojislav Seselj, can be elected.

The Democratic party leader, Zoran Djindjic, mayor of Belgrade until he was dismissed by Mr Milosevic, had urged Serbians not to endorse the elections by voting.

If less than 50 per cent of the electorate votes, the presidential elections have to be re-staged, which could push Serbia into further political chaos. The Socialist acting president, Dragan Tomic, will remain temporarily in office if fresh elections are needed.

Mr Seselj, the Radical party leader who opposes the Dayton peace process in Bosnia, had at first claimed the turnout would exceed the 50 per cent minimum needed. He later conceded that he would

probably not gain the presidency but expressed confidence that he would secure a re-run of the election later this year.

On Monday, the election commission spokesman, Nebojsa Radic, said that Mr Seselj led the Socialist party candidate, Mr Ljilic, by 49.98 per cent to 46.99 with votes from 85 per cent of the polling stations counted.

"Neither candidate at this point has met the conditions for election as president of the republic," he added. The commission was expected to issue final official results later this week.

A Socialist party spokesman acknowledged Mr Seselj's slight lead and said voter turnout was 48.68 per cent.

In a simultaneous vote in the other remaining Yugoslav republic, Montenegro, two arch rivals appeared to be heading for a runoff with neither achieving the 50 per cent needed for outright victory.

The two elections were a test of Mr Milosevic's grip on power. In the parliamentary elections last month, his ruling alliance lost its majority and control of the Serbian assembly.

The two candidates on offer for the presidency indicate that little has changed in Serbian politics. Both represent authoritarian parties and neither is likely to lead the country to a democratic and brighter future.

Mr Ljilic, a colourless figure, was the president of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia until last June. As Mr Milosevic's protégé, he is unlikely to challenge his leader, allowing him to remain in control of Yugoslav politics.

In a television debate with Mr Seselj, Mr Ljilic did not appear predisposed to the democratic ideal. "We Serbs are really genetically predestined for big things at the intellectual level. We are above many in Europe," he said.

His opponent is even more extreme. Mr Seselj, a large, loud and red-faced radical, is a hardline nationalist who led paramilitary forces during the wars in the former Yugoslavia. He talks of creating a Greater Serbia, extending its borders through Bosnia and Croatia into Germany, and is scathing about both the Dayton agreement for Bosnia and United States policy in the Balkans.

On Monday, the US envoy for former Yugoslavia, ambassador Robert Gelbard, called Mr Seselj a fascist, saying Washington could not work with him as he represented "backwardness" and "darkness".

French trial will examine shame of Vichy

Paul Webster in Paris

FRANCE will be forced to face up to its appalling anti-Semitic past when the 10-week trial of Maurice Papon for wartime crimes against humanity opens this week in a hearing seen as a national examination of conscience.

Mr Papon, aged 87 — who will be protected by a bulletproof screen — was responsible for Jewish affairs only in Bordeaux. But the nine jury members and three judges will be implicitly asked to pass an historic judgment on the cowardice, self-interest and cynicism of Philippe Pétain's government, which helped the Nazis to murder thousands of Jews.

Mr Papon will spend the night before the trial begins in a Bordeaux jail and will immediately ask the court to free him from having to spend every night behind bars until the case concludes on December 23.

If the court allows him to appear freely, he will personally defend

claims that as a civil servant in German-occupied territory he had no choice in sending French police to round up 1,500 Jews. They were transferred to the Drancy concentration camp near Paris, and then to gas chambers at Auschwitz between 1942 and 1944.

If the custody order is not revoked, Mr Papon will remain silent and leave it to his lawyer, Jean-Marc Varaut, to defend what is left of his honour.

Whether it is Mr Papon or Mr Varaut who argues the case, the defence's central premise is simple. Vichy was a legitimate regime, put in place by parliament in 1940. As a civil servant, Mr Papon took an oath of allegiance to Marshal Pétain, author of collaborationist policies with the Nazis over which functionaries had no discretion. His policy was to hand over to the Nazis immigrant and French Jews, of whom nearly 75,000 were murdered.

Although a defence of obedience to orders has been discredited since

Nuremberg for members of the military, the civilian equivalent is still a murky-defined area, giving the French jury the chance of setting an international precedent in its final ruling that could make all officials think twice during moments of grave crisis.

This is the third trial in French history for crimes against humanity, although several attempts collapsed because the accused died while under investigation. The two previous trials, both of which ended in life sentences, involved armed and uniformed men. They died in prison, the prospect Mr Papon faces.

Neither case touched the question of bureaucratic responsibility. The 1987 trial of Klaus Barbie, the Gestapo chief in Lyon, was a sequel to Nuremberg. He had no hope of release after classic evidence of the persecution, torture and murder of Jews. The 1994 trial of a Frenchman, Paul Touvier, a leader of the Lyon *milice* — the police force

created by the Vichy government to help the Gestapo — moved on to new ground because he had been given refuge by the Catholic Church for 50 years.

Confirmation of the Catholic Church's role as Pétain's principal moral support started the process that led to French bishops asking for the forgiveness of Jews last week. The Touvier trial also broke down resistance, led by the late President François Mitterrand, to a general condemnation of the Vichy government.

Two months after his election as president in May 1995, Jacques Chirac denounced Vichy as a criminal regime, putting an end to years of semantic evasion throughout the French establishment.

Since 1983, when school textbooks first acknowledged that the French police were the principal arm of repression against the Jews, the popular view of Vichy as a criminal state had slowly become gener-



Papon on trial for war crimes

ally accepted by younger generations. Historians have since made up ground on anti-Vichy revelations and analyses once led by foreign writers.

It has taken 16 years of legal battles led by two lawyers, Serge Klarsfeld and Gerard Boulanger, to bring about Mr Papon's trial.

Le Monde, page 22

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 12 1997

US alert over forest fires in Amazonia

Gail Brown

THOUSANDS of fires are burning 26,000 sq km of Amazon rainforest as loggers, cattle ranchers and peasants take advantage of the region's dry season to clear land for farming.

The fires — which are on as great a scale as those raging across Indonesia — are being monitored by a United States National Space Research Institute satellite.

It shows that the number of fires deliberately started in the 41 days to September 21 — the traditional dry season — is 28 per cent higher than last year, 24,549 compared with 19,115; an average of 599 fires a day compared with 466 in 1996.

More than half are in the Mato Grosso region, which has received a \$240 million World Bank loan intended to halt deforestation. The logging capital, Manaus, is suffering a smog similar to that which has been covering much of Indonesia and Malaysia — the first experienced in the Amazon region.

According to experts at the US Environment Defence Fund, burning is also taking place in the Amazon states of Para and, to a lesser extent, Tocantins, Rondonia and Maranhão.

The Fund believes that the records probably understate the amount of forest clearance because they only cover the largest and longest-burning fires. Some fires started during the day have burnt out by the time the satellite passes.

The figures show that the rate of deforestation, which was thought to be slowing down at the time of the Rio Earth Summit in the early 1990s, is increasing again. Since records began in the early 1980s, more than 12 per cent of the Amazon forest has been destroyed.

Sarah Tyack, a Friends of the Earth spokeswoman, said the figures were causing alarm.

"We are very concerned at the sheer scale of deforestation," she said. "The logging in the region is very great and once the forest has been thinned it is easier to burn."

She said the dry season had been longer and drier than normal, increasing the likelihood that some of the fires were out of control.



US to ban child labour imports

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE United States Congress last week passed its first legislation to ban imported goods made by forced child labour — a measure that will have a huge impact on manufacturing communities in the Third World and on domestic consumption.

The legislation is intended to help end child slavery around the world and the bonded labour of millions of children, some as young as four.

It inevitably creates a moral dilemma: the potential closure of factories and sweatshops that employed child labour and supplied the US market is likely to leave poor communities even poorer.

The bill — which has emerged from a long incubation of quiet backroom manoeuvre — was sponsored by an independent member of Congress, Bernard Sanders of Vermont, who calls it "an extremely important moral issue". He sees the children who make rugs from India or toys from China as "indentured servants or virtual slaves".

Products affected will include carpets and rugs, sports shoes, footballs, toys and trinkets.

The US followed European countries in banning child labour in the early years of this century, but there has never been an attempt by a government to legislate against the

import of goods made by enslaved or indentured children.

There has been a ruling for 150 years, the international trade authority, that it would not use ball made by child labour.

Leading the campaign against child labour have been such figures as Terry Collingsworth of the International Labour Rights Fund, based in Washington, who toured India and Nepal for four years researching the abuse of children making rugs and carpets.

"You could walk into the factories at will," he says, "and see children looking like they could fall over at any moment." Supervisors, he said, used hot irons to scar shut cuts on the children's fingers from endless stitching so they would not bleed on the fabrics.

Children across India and the Pacific Rim are sold into bondage by their parents to make goods for export to the US, says the Human Rights Watch organisation. Children are chained to their looms and remain bonded until the age of 21, when they have to pay interest on their debts and pay for any mistakes.

Although the new legislation has the support of the Clinton administration and is expected to receive the president's seal of approval, it will not necessarily secure the funding needed to implement it.

and obstruction are normal hazards.

Significant progress has been made since 1991 in documenting Iraq's nuclear, ballistic missile and chemical weapons programmes, but its biological warfare capacity remains very much a "black hole".

Mr Butler, previously Australia's ambassador to the UN and a highly respected arms control negotiator, was lavishly praised by the Iraqis when he took over from the veteran Swedish diplomat Rolf Ekeroth in July. But he makes no attempt to conceal his impatience.

"Two weeks ago in Baghdad I complained trenchantly to the Iraqis that they had still not made available their full, final and complete declaration on biological weapons," he said.

will demand travel restrictions, further limiting their contact with the outside world.

Obviously, Unscop reported new problems only last month. In one incident, an Iraqi official on a UN helicopter had to be restrained for fear he would seize the controls during an inspection flight over Tikrit military barracks. In another incident two days later, a biological team was prevented from inspecting the Sarabadi Republican Guard base.

Iraq has good reason to loathe Unscop's operation, which uses sophisticated sensors, sniffers, remote cameras, ground-penetrating radar and high-altitude U2 spy planes. Threats, lying

the Iraqis continue to attempt to guide us away from or tell us less than the truth," Mr Butler told the Guardian. "I mean they should not remove documents from sites or burn them, but leave them for us to look at."

The latest Unscop report, prepared by its 150 staff in New York and the Baghdad monitoring and verification centre, will be the first since June, when the UN Security Council threatened to take new punitive measures if Iraq failed to co-operate. Oil sanctions, which are crippling its economy, can be lifted only when the commission's work is done.

Senior Iraqi officials are worried that the US and Britain, the leading Security Council hawk,



A lifeboat full of passengers approaches a rescue ship after evacuating the cruise liner MV Romantica in the Mediterranean near Cyprus. Fire broke out in the engine room last Saturday, leading to the evacuation of 600 passengers. PHOTOGRAPH: MARCO DI GIULIO

Iraq 'misleading arms inspectors'

THERE is still serious concern about the extent of Saddam Hussein's co-operation with United Nations inspectors, according to the diplomat leading efforts to monitor and destroy Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, writes Ian Black in New York.

Richard Butler, head of the UN special commission, Unscop, indicated that Iraq's submission of a 640-page account of its biological weapons efforts fell short of being a "full, final and complete disclosure", as required — and that a report due to be published next month was unlikely to give Iraq a clean bill of health.

"There are a number of reasons to have serious concerns that

Summit to boost rights in Europe

Stephen Bates in Brussels

AN EXTENSION of human rights in 40 European countries — including the ability to appeal directly against governments to a streamlined Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg — was expected to be agreed at a summit in Strasbourg on Friday.

The gathering of leaders for only the second summit in the Council of Europe's 48-year history may produce a breakthrough in improving the rights of 800 million citizens from Iceland to Ukraine.

The council, which concentrates on human rights, was set up at the urging of Winston Churchill in 1949. Countries have to demonstrate their commitment to democracy and the judicial process to become members — at least in theory. Croatia joined last year along with Russia, but Belarus had its guest status revoked in January. Bosnia, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan also have guest status and are waiting for full membership.

It is in such countries, unused to citizens' rights and democracy, that the reforms are expected to have the most impact.

"This is a development of immense importance in human rights across Europe. A person living in Ukraine or Turkey can appeal direct to the Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg," said Daniel Tarschys, the Swedish secretary-general of the council.

The summit is also expected to support declarations banning human cloning and commitments to improved protection for minority groups such as migrant workers. A declaration on stronger child protection laws and a commitment to sexual equality are also planned.

The right of direct appeal will emerge from proposals to streamline the workings of the European Court of Human Rights and to appoint a human rights ombudsman. Until now complaints have been investigated by a commission and forwarded to a committee of ministers of member states before being brought before the court — a process that can take up to five years.

EU sets example on greenhouse gases

Martin Walker in Brussels

EUROPE is on track to beat its self-imposed target for the reduction of global warming emissions to below 1990 levels by 2000, the European Commission boasted last week.

The unexpected success gave credibility to its new offer to cut emissions to 15 per cent lower than 1990 levels by 2010, it claimed. The offer, designed to put pressure on the United States and Japan to reach a tough pact on global warming at the Kyoto summit in December, had been questioned by US officials as unrealistic.

Three unexpected factors ex-

plained the European success, said Jorgen Henningsen, the director of environmental quality. The first was Britain's shift from coal to gas-fired power stations, which would allow Britain to claim a 6 per cent drop in greenhouse gas emissions by 2000.

The closure of obsolete and dirty factories in the former East Germany meant the Germans were on track for a 12 per cent cut in emissions. And France's nuclear power stations were performing "better than expected", reducing the need to burn fossil fuels. Finally, the European recession had kept down energy demand in other countries, he said.

The offer of a 15 per cent cut by 2010 is conditional on the US and

Japan following suit. If Europe tried to go it alone, it would soon suffer a backlash as energy-intensive industries decamped for easier climates.

The Commission issued its detailed plan on emission reduction ahead of this week's special conference at the White House, where the US was expected to thrash out its own negotiating position for Kyoto. Under pressure from Congress and corporations to make no commitment that could damage industry, raise taxes or threaten jobs, the US had tried to fend off the European Union initiative as unrealistic.

The US is also hoping to promote two alternative plans that would ease its own obligations. The first

would seek to require developing countries to pledge their own cuts. The other is for a market in trading emission rights between polluters, so that companies that had outperformed their target by investing in clean technology could "sell" their pollution credits to dirtier plants.

More than 1,500 of the world's most distinguished scientists have urged leaders to prevent the "potentially devastating consequences of human-induced global warming". Their petition, supported by 104 of the 138 surviving recipients of science Nobel prizes, was presented to President Clinton last week.

Comment, page 14



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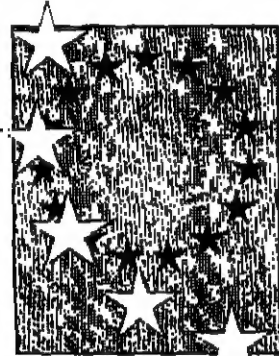
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Trigger happy... A crane moves automatic weapons at a Melbourne scrapyard, where they were to be melted down after a deadline to turn in illegal arms for money expired last week. PHOTOGRAPH BY JERRY GALEA

Big names duck Beatrix's bash



Europe this week
Martin Walker

IN A delicate compromise between regal pageantry and commercial values, the Treaty of Amsterdam was signed in the Burgers Hall of the Dutch royal palace in Amsterdam last week in a ceremony that brought to mind the curious Sherlock Holmes case of the dog that failed to bark in the night.

Here was a formal treaty, signed 40 years after the European Community's founding ceremony in Rome, and five years after the Maastricht treaty. Once attested by all 15 member states, the document will be taken to Rome to rest alongside those other two grand treaties in the archives of the European project.

So where was everybody? Everybody who is anybody, that is, Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands was there. So were her prime minister and the prime minister of Luxembourg, Jean-Claude Juncker. The president of the European Commission, the former Luxembourg premier Jacques Santer turned up, along with José María Gil-Robles, the president of the European Parliament.

Valiant and honourable men, but not quite of the calibre of the absentees such as Germany's Helmut Kohl, France's Jacques Chirac or Britain's Tony Blair.

To be frank, what Brussels sees as the broadly disappointing outcome of the Amsterdam treaty negotiations last June may not deserve a turnout of the stars. The draft speech Santer had intended to deliver, until he was persuaded it would be ungracious to his Dutch hosts, had meant to criticise the treaty quite bluntly.

"I do not hide its insufficiencies, its weaknesses, its great gaps —

notably in the field of institutional reform," read his draft speech, but dropped from his formal address. He had intended to go on to say: "We have drawn the lessons from Maastricht — it has at last become indispensable in the eyes of all to come to grips with the real concerns of our citizens." But he dropped that bit too.

The weight of symbolism hung heavily upon Santer, speaking in the great palace originally built as the Amsterdam town hall of the 17th century Dutch republic.

Some of the old echoes remain, like the statuary figure above the heads of the assembled signatories to the treaty, which portrayed the figure of justice, bearing not just the scales of justice but also the tools of punishment: an axe, whips, staves, fearsome pincers and things that the guide book describes as "assorted implements of torture". As Santer enunciated the watered-down trill of diplo-speak, he raised his suffering eyes to the figure of justice, and looked as if some of those implements had been used on him.

His draft speech had been nothing but the truth. Amsterdam produced a thin and spineless treaty, which may be why the British government was quietly satisfied with it. Meeting in Corfu in 1994, the European Council had defined the future task of the Amsterdam summit clearly enough: "The institutional conditions for ensuring the proper functioning of the Union must be created at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference, which for that reason must take place before accession negotiations begin".

As the strongly pro-European think-tank, the European Policy Centre, commented immediately after the Amsterdam treaty was agreed last June: "By that crucial litmus test the heads of government totally failed in their self-appointed task."

There was no reweighting of votes within the Council of Ministers and no reduction in the already unwieldy number of 20 commissioners, some of them visibly underemployed. And the pattern now seems to be set that each of the new members will get their own commissioners too. That will mean 26 of them, when there is really work for perhaps half that number. Amsterdam delivered some modest improvement in the powers of the parliament, but no real streamlining of the

European institutions, and pitifully little extension of the much-vanted plans for qualified majority votes.

The reason for that, however, was the really important change to emerge from Amsterdam. Germany, traditionally the most potent supporter of institutional reforms, suddenly started acting in the old obstructive way that Britain perfected over the past decade. Because of domestic political pressure from the German provinces, Kohl personally vetoed most of the proposals for majority votes, rather than strive to achieve the traditional unanimity. In Kohl's now-celebrated visit to the lavatory during the Amsterdam haggling, his deputy said Germany could agree to qualified majority votes in cultural matters. Kohl came back, drying his hands, and squashed that agreement before he sat down.

Amsterdam thus saw the moment when Germany ceased to be the conciliatory and federalising bankroller of the European project, and became strikingly more pragmatic and querulous, if not qualifying outright for Eurosceptic status. Certainly the coming of the new Socialist-led government in Paris had dismayed Kohl, and cast real doubt over durability of the Franco-German axis, the traditional locomotive of the European project.

Not by coincidence, this was also the moment when Germany's ever-open wallet began to close. Germany now accounts for two-thirds of the net contributions to the \$90 billion EU budget. Stretched by the trillion-dollar burden of absorbing East Germany throughout this decade, Kohl became Chancellor Nein.

But if Germany became less conciliatory at Amsterdam, Britain became less confrontational. At least in its rhetoric, and in some of its votes on reform, the Labour government said that it wanted to be part of the solution in Europe rather than part of the problem.

So for all its disappointments as a treaty to remodel and modernise the Union ready for the wave of new entrants, Amsterdam signalled a historic shift in the political character of Europe. But beyond the commitment to monetary union, and the rather less certain one to enlargement, nobody is sure what this new Europe is becoming — which helps to explain last week's disappointing turnout at the signing party.

Crumbs from the top table fail to nourish UN

COMMENT
Ian Black

AMBERTO DINI, the Italian foreign minister, was looking gloomy as he cruised the corridors of the United Nations last week searching in vain for backers for his country's bid for a seat at the world's top table.

He was not cracking jokes — and certainly not the old favourite in which a man whinges in a pantomime Italian accent: "Germany and Japan are going to join the Security Council. Why not us? We lost the war, too."

From speeches in the General Assembly, it is clear that there is wide support for unfreezing the status quo to bring in the vanquished of 1945 — now two of the world's richest countries — and adding more seats round the table.

The UK Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, called explicitly for German and Japanese accession and for "a balance between developed and developing countries in a modernised Council", but he conspicuously named no other names.

This is no mere detail: most Latin American countries are not prepared to have Lusophone Brazil representing a predominantly Spanish-speaking continent. India and Pakistan have rival claims, as do Indonesia and Malaysia. Africa's hopefuls — Nigeria, South Africa and Egypt — are all problematic.

And that is just for starters, without the vexed question of whether the members of an expanded council, permanent or rotating, should have a veto. Vetoes are wielded only by the United States, Russia, China, France and Britain, otherwise known as the Permanent Five. (No one even dares ask whether the Europeans might share a seat.)

UN insiders argue that expansion is unlikely this year. Some wonder aloud whether the Permanent Five, bottoms firmly on seats, are not talking up the issue and inflating expectations.

This is part of a broader picture: hope of radical change at the UN, so high a few months ago when Kofi Annan took over as secretary-general from the much (and in many ways unfairly) reviled Boutros Boutros-Ghali, seem to be fading as the size of the task ahead becomes apparent.

Mr Annan was followed to the assembly podium by Bill Clinton, saying many good things about the UN's role but also making it clear that the US's unpaid dues will be forthcoming only on US terms.

Their conditions for repayment include writing off nearly half the US debt of \$1.6 billion and reducing the US share of UN expenses from 25 per cent to 20 per cent, when its share of world income is 27 per cent.

So with little prospect of joy, the payment front, Mr Annan's other plans seem destined for trouble. He has done what he can, his important parts of his reform programme require General Assembly approval.

Tanzania's foreign minister, Jakaya Kikwete, spoke to many in the Third World when he called the proposals for a less-bureaucratic "basis for discussion" but argued that the emphasis should be put on development projects.

Vested interests are hard to shift. Long-overdue plans to slim down the department for public information, for example, are encountering opposition from the Group of 77, while a hidden US hand behind a proposal which genuinely aims to make the institution more effective.

The North-South divide seems widening. As Mary Robinson rebarks on the novel mission of the UN's first commissioner for human rights, Malaysia's Mahatir Muhammad wants to rewrite the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to take account of cultural differences.

On another front, UN peacekeeping, a staple of the immediate post-cold-war years, is still reeling from the débâcle in Somalia and a mixed record in Bosnia.

The net impression is that the UN can be steadied by a firm hand (the tiller under Mr Annan's stewardship, but it looks unlikely to sail very far).

It is a truism that the UN is only as effective as its members want it to be. Not all 185 are equally guilty of not trying hard enough. But with plans being laid for a Millennium assembly after the non-event of the 50th anniversary two years ago, it would be useful if everyone — from the US downwards — would admit that greater effort is needed to support the only United Nations we've got.

US death row inspected

Ed Vulliamy in Washington

THE United States is being put under the kind of scrutiny by the United Nations that it usually urges for other countries as an international team investigating its use of the death penalty toured the South last week.

The UN inquiry is being led by Bacre Ndiaye, a leading human rights investigator from Senegal. He is the second such UN monitor of the US. The first was on racism in 1992. Like his predecessor, Mr Ndiaye was initially welcomed by the administration, which approved his tour last year, and he was expected to meet senior politicians.

Requests were made to meet President Clinton and Vice-President Al Gore. Mr Ndiaye says he was especially eager to meet the attorney-general, Janet Reno, and

representatives of the supreme court. But these have been refused. During the first few days of his tour, visiting prisons and trying to talk to politicians, Mr Ndiaye had to be content with junior officials, two congressmen, and no senators.

Officials at the UN were anxious to point out, however, that Mr Ndiaye was touring Washington during the penultimate week of the congressional term, and that politicians were "very, very busy".

Mr Ndiaye was appointed under the auspices of the UN Commission on Human Rights, which urges member states to enforce a human rights convention curbing the use of "summary or arbitrary executions". He said the US was "expanding its death penalty."

Washington Post, page 16

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
October 12 1997

Bickering poisons New Zealand coalition

Anthony Hubbard in Wellington

NEW ZEALAND'S experiment with coalition government has turned into a shambles. One year after the country switched from the first-past-the-post system to the German form of proportional representation, its politics have acquired an air of farce and bewilderment.

The centre-right coalition led by two former foes — the prime minister, Jim Bolger, and the deputy prime minister, Winston Peters — is now profoundly unpopular. A series of scandals and spats has slashed support for Mr Peters's New Zealand First (NZF) party to 1 or 2 per cent.

This in turn has poisoned the senior coalition partner, Mr Bolger's conservative National party. National has plummeted in the polls, putting Mr Bolger's leadership under serious threat. The matey embrace of the two politicians now threatens to strangle them both.

Mr Peters, a populist turned kingmaker after NZF won 13 per cent of the vote at last October's election, has suffered two huge defeats in recent weeks. Last month voters overwhelmingly rejected — by 92 per cent in a referendum — his proposal for a compulsory superannuation scheme.

Earlier, a commission of inquiry found that Mr Peters had no evidence to back his accusation that large companies were practising tax evasion. The Winebox affair, so



Peters: his support has collapsed

named after the crate in which allegedly incriminating documents were found, has been a long-running Peters campaign.

Mr Peters's problems are beginning to rile Mr Bolger. Speaking after mounting strife within NZF, Mr Bolger said that the coalition had to be seen to be listening to the electorate, "which is very clearly saying, 'Stop the nonsense, get on with the job'".

The "nonsense" has persisted for some time. Quarrelling inside NZF came to a head last month while Mr Peters was overseas. Neil Kiron accused a fellow NZF MP, cabinet minister Tuariki Delamere, of lying. He then crossed the floor of the House to vote with the opposition.

Mr Kiron has become something of a loose cannon since being sacked as associate health minister after a long-running dispute over privatisation with National's health minister, Bill English. He also claims there has been a cover-up over the winding-back of odometers in imported cars — an accusation rejected by Mr Delamere, who replaced him as Customs minister.

Tan Henare, Mr Peters's party deputy, added to the coalition's woes by breaking cabinet ranks over the case of a terminally ill

64-year-old man refused kidney dialysis. While Mr English said the issue was a decision for doctors to make, Mr Henare said it showed the whole system was faulty.

There is now mounting panic and mounting dissension. As Jenny Bloxham, who earlier resigned as NZF's vice-president, said in defence of the right of party MPs to speak out: "We are down to 1.9 per cent in the polls — what have we got to lose?"

Fifteen of NZF's 17 MPs are new to parliament, and they often appear lost. Tukoroirangi Morgan caused the first scandal, before the traditional honeymoon period for a new government had even begun. It was

revealed that while working for a state-funded Maori television station before he became an MP, Mr Morgan spent NZ\$4,000 in expenses on clothing, including \$89 on a pair of boxer shorts. "Tuku's underpants" caused an uproar, and continue to flutter as an emblem of greed and ineptitude.

Some of his fellow Maori MPs have adopted a self-styled "warrior" approach to politics, and frightened the other half of Mr Peters's power base — the *pakeha* (white) pensioners. And Mr Peters himself got into an undignified fracas in a parliamentary corridor earlier this year with a redneck National party MP, John Banks.

Now Mr Peters's support in his flagship electorate of Tauranga has collapsed. His electorate campaign chairman, Roly Hammond, resigned in protest at the Maori MPs' "antics".

All this has rubbed off on the National party, which also has its own problems. Christine Fletcher, a minister outside cabinet, resigned last month and called for Mr Bolger's head. The main question now is when the coup will be staged.

All these ructions within government have deepened disenchantment with the new electoral system, known as Mixed Member Proportional (MMP). Voters chose it in reaction to the broken promises of Labour and National, who since 1984

have carried out a thoroughgoing Thatcherite reform of the economy.

Mr Peters, sacked from Mr Bolger's National cabinet in 1992, took his new party to power by campaigning against political treachery. He stands accused of the very same thing: before the election he vowed to "get rid" of the National party. He is now their coalition partner.

Defenders of MMP argue that the trouble lies not with the system but the country's politicians. Yet most voters cannot disentangle the two.

Now Mr Bolger, in a desperate attempt to shore up his crumbling administration, has launched a new rightwing initiative for further privatisation. It is "springtime" in New Zealand, he said this month, and time for renewal. For his government, however, there seems no end to the woes of winter.

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The U'wa people of Colombia have a way of life devoted to keeping the planet alive. For them, the prospect of international oil companies drilling their land portends the end of the world. **John Vidal** reports

A tribe's suicide pact

THE U'wa are one of South America's more remote and mystical people. They have lived in the foothills and cloudforests of the Andes in northeast Colombia since, they believe, the world began, and had almost no contact with the outside world until 40 years ago. And in all that time, in all their immense oral history, there is no record of them ever having fought outsiders or each other, of them causing any pollution, or of them taking anything that was not always theirs. Yet now, this retiring, self-governing society, which believes that it exists only to keep the world in harmony, faces certain apocalypse because of the inroads made into their lands by British and United States oil companies.

To reach the small U'wa communities up in the mountains, you have to leave the Colombian plains, ford several rivers and then follow the tracks that lead up to the fields cleared from the forest 35 years ago by colonist farmers. There, you must wait for several days on the edge of the U'wa's territory, hoping to gain the trust of their spiritual leaders. If and when that trust is given, there is another long hike through bog, bush and jungle until you come to a near-vertical 600-metre escarpment cliff. You then follow the mountain streams up the cliff, led by machete and luminous blue, handkerchief-sized butterflies. Occasionally, the sun breaks through the canopy, but mostly there is no sense of a world beyond. Exhausted, scratched and bitten, you finally emerge at the top of the cliff. Clouds hang like smoke on the valley sides below. Behind you, the great Cobará river snakes away to the Orinoco and the Amazon Basin; to the north is Venezuela and the ever-rising hills leading up to the Sierra Nevada de Cocuy and its snow-topped peaks.

In pre-colonial days, the U'wa ranged across an area the size of Wales; today, most of the few thousand people who remain have retreated to the mountains to preserve their culture in the face of incursions by white settlers. Their 100,000-hectare designated territory is just 10 per cent of their ancestral lands. It is a remote place, far from the cities, the drug and oil economies, and the guerrilla warfare that is now tearing lowland Colombia apart.

An old man, a string bag on his shoulder and with hands coloured orange from pulping fruit, beckons us from the edge of his banana patch and calls with a monkey yelp to his Spanish-speaking son, Betencaro. Betencaro is a tubby, Pan-like figure, with the softest of handshakes and the eagerness of a child. The 400m walk through the forest to his house takes an hour as he stops every few yards to show us his world. "This is what we eat," he says. He bends down, picks and strips a plant, exposes its heart and offers it. "Here is a plate" — he picks off a leaf, bends it four ways like macramé, and pierces the corners with a hard, spiky grass. This root is a medicine for the stomach... Here, taste this, it's an anaesthetic — it leaves my mouth numb within seconds. He calls to the birds and the frogs, and shows us where the aphrodisiacal honey comes from.

There is nothing in the forest that Betencaro and the U'wa do not use. These berries make soap; that fungus (he points to a tree) lights fires. He makes furniture with this creeper, bags from that. Here's a vine good for bow strings. This is where the *cuchi-cuchi* (monkeys) live; where the birds collect.

We eat bark and berry, root, tuber, bean, fruit and leaf. Betencaro is laughing his head off, beaming at his sufficiency. Everything in this cloudy Garden of Eden is useful to him. Except for one plant with a small white flower. "Hah," he says, tearing it up by the root and throwing it to the forest floor as if he were a National Trust gardener finding ground elder. "The Christians brought that. It promises everything, but it's useless."

We reach his house, which, like his father's, is surrounded by a chaos of coca bushes, bananas and fruit trees. Betencaro regrets that

he cannot invite us in because, he says, we will upset the gods who determine his every action and thought. He would have to get a *wedhaiya* (U'wa spiritual leader) to breathe on our clothes, to purify us and to prevent our culture from contaminating his home. So we sit outside and talk of the one thing that is occupying U'wa minds. Oil.

One hundred and sixty kilometres to the east, where the Cobará river spills first through the state of Arauca before moving on to a landlocked floodplain, is the Caño Limón oilfield. It is one of the world's largest, with more than 1,200 million barrels of oil, and it earns Colombia hundreds of millions of dollars a year. The oilfield is licensed to the US oil corporation Occidental (Oxy), which is in equal partnership with the Anglo-Dutch corporation, Shell. Ecopetrol, Colombia's state oil company, has a smaller share.

The diametrically opposed worlds of the U'wa and the petrol companies — of consumerism and mysticism, of corporations and the self-sufficient — are clashing terribly in South America, and especially in Colombia. Peru and Ecuador, which are set to displace the Middle East as the preferred source of US oil.

Where the U'wa depend on the natural inaccessibility of their habitat to protect their culture, these oil companies protect their 5,000-hectare holding with 3m-high coils of razor wire and miles of steel fences. Oxy and Shell pay a "war tax" of \$1 per barrel (about \$180,000 a day) to pay for the protection of the Colombian army from the escalating guerrilla war.

At Caño Limón we are met by nervous-looking young men with machine guns who spend their days in concrete pillboxes or in a bullet-plattered guard post. Oxy representatives are waiting for us, too. Even so, it takes us half an hour and five radio and mobile telephone calls to pass through three sets of security gates into a manicured colonial compound that would do justice to Club Méditerranée. There are swimming pools, athletic tracks, tennis and racket courts, gymnasiums, restaurants, a hospital, helicopter pads, shops. Everything must be brought in from outside to cater for the 150 oilworkers who live here for months at a stretch, not daring to leave for fear of being shot or kidnapped by the competing armies of guerrillas. It is like a war zone mixed with a holiday camp.

Photographs and images on the walls celebrate speed, power and, above all, the triumph of oil production and the companies' domination of nature. This river has been straightened, millions of tonnes of earth have been moved, lakes filled in, new ones formed. This is the great pipeline that crosses the mountains to export the oil.

AT THEIR current rate of output, Shell and Oxy have only about 10 years' exploitation left of the Caño Limón, and with the end in sight for this fabulously profitable field, they are searching for new sites. They have been licensed by the Colombian government to explore and exploit a large block of land called Samoré. The problem is that Samoré includes a sizeable part of the U'wa's existing, and much of their ancestral, territory.

The companies have already spent \$16 million on seismic studies, which revealed that Samoré holds as much oil as Caño Limón. But for the U'wa, any incursion on to their territory would be devastating, and their response is categorical: if and when Shell and Oxy move in to their mountains, the tribal leaders say that many U'wa will throw themselves off a high cliff called The Cliff Of Death in an act of mass ritual suicide. For the U'wa, this would be a positive act — better to die with both dignity and culture intact, they say, than to see their world torn apart.

Mass ritual suicide is part of the U'wa culture. The tribe's oral history recounts how in the 16th century one large U'wa community, in retreat from the Spaniards, came to The



An U'wa tribeswoman in the Colombian rainforest

Cliff Of Death. All U'wa territory is considered sacred, but there are some areas, the cliff included, where no one may go. U'wa history relates that, faced with being forced to move on to this forbidden land, the tribe put their children in clay pots and cast them off the cliff before leaping backwards after them. If the U'wa carry out their threat, they will go back to The Cliff Of Death.

For the government, the U'wa's decision is a "philosophical dilemma" that is threatening to become an international incident, according to Rodrigo Villanizar, the disgraced former minister of mines and petrol who resigned in August following a corruption scandal. James Niehaus, vice-president of Oxy Worldwide Production in California, calls it "tragic". The U'wa say it would be the end of the world, and the people of Colombia are horrified. On a recent trip to London, Villanizar said, "My son asks me, 'Daddy, are you going to make the Indians jump off the cliff?'"

Colombia's constitution requires it to protect its 84 tribes of indigenous peoples, but the country has an equal duty to develop its resources for the benefit of all. The circle is impossible to square because the U'wa do not want financial recompense, development or anything that the state or the neo-liberal economy can offer. They want to be left alone, like the Kogul tribe in the north of the country, which has withdrawn from all contact with white society. The U'wa way of life is not negotiable, they say. It is the ultimate peaceful protest.

But there are billions of dollars at stake, and oil is now Colombia's main export. The U'wa are semi-autonomous, and their lands are protected, but they do not own the mineral rights. Colombia's highest constitutional court ruled in February that Occidental and the government were guilty of violating the fundamental right of consultation with the U'wa, and were threatening their ethnic, cultural, social and economic identity. Within weeks, however, the higher administrative court effectively overruled this verdict and reinstated the Oxy/Shell mining permit. The current legal position is that the Samoré oilfield can now be developed whenever Shell and Oxy decide to move in. The result is a tense political stand-off, with the companies and the government believing that they can still persuade the U'wa to accept oil development on their land.

"No one has encountered a case like this before," says Eduardo Muñoz-Gómez, minis-

ter in the Colombian embassy in London. "We can't afford one person committing suicide." Oxy's stance is more hardline. The suicide threat is little more than a gesture, "a threat," says Gerardo Vargas, an Oxy community relations officer in Arauca. Besides, says the corporation, there is no written evidence of the U'wa suicides in the 16th century. "The U'wa are not going to jump," says Vargas. "I will commit suicide myself first. I know them. Suicide is not the philosophy of the U'wa." They have allowed themselves to get cornered. One of the problems of their culture is that they do not agree amongst themselves. Everyone is completely individualistic.

But who, exactly, has Oxy been talking to? Vargas claims that the corporation has been in continual "negotiation" and "talks" with the U'wa since the application was made in 1985. The U'wa, he says, were on the point of signing an agreement as late as 1993. He calls them his friends.

The reality is that Oxy has talked to only one small, geographically isolated U'wa group on a consistent basis, and all of them are more or less integrated with white society. If living in poverty, the corporation has talked to no spiritual leaders and has never visited the main U'wa communities or power centres. Only five people in a community of several thousand seem prepared to say that they want the oil to come. All five have connections with Oxy. Only one of them speaks U'wa, and four live in towns.

In May, these five were the "U'wa community representatives" at a meeting in Bogotá to discuss the situation with a group of senators. Also there were senior Oxy executives, a government-paid anthropologist, the president of the state oil company Ecopetrol and three state ministers — of mines, interior and environment. The five "U'wa representatives" signed a document stating that they were in favour of oil exploitation with certain provisions: protection of the environment, social programmes and "sustainable development".

When pressed recently, however, one said that she is "not exactly" in favour of oil exploitation on U'wa land. She sees herself as someone trying to find a solution and avoid conflict.

Only one or two outsiders have ever been given full access to the main U'wa communities and the *wedhaiya*. Ann Osborn, an Oxford university anthropologist, went to the U'wa in 1958 when she was in her early

'Oil companies have always got what they wanted by taking advantage of others' weaknesses. This time it is not working'

Continued from page 8

twenties and spent more than 10 years with the U'wa in the 1970s and 1980s, and helped in the tribe's fight to secure its territory.

Osborn died in 1988, but her life's work is two books describing a complex, mystical society rooted in ritual and myth, and led by the purest in the tribe, the elected *wedhaiya*. The U'wa, says Osborn, attach a spiritual value to everything. They believe that they are the centre of a living earth and that they perpetuate all life by protecting it. Echoing James Lovelock's Gaia theory and radical science that proposes that the earth is holistically a living organism, the U'wa say everything — from land, tree and rock to river, sky and place — is alive and therefore sacred.

The U'wa protect the land not just in the strict environmental sense that they never waste, pollute or take more than the land can bear, but also in ritual chant and dance. Rather as the Australian Aboriginals have their songlines, so the U'wa daily sing the world into creation by reciting their myths and their place names. They keep the world alive by, literally, singing it. The birds, too, create places by chanting the names of the areas they fly over. Everything, said Osborn, that the U'wa do or think is focused to "protect and continue life".

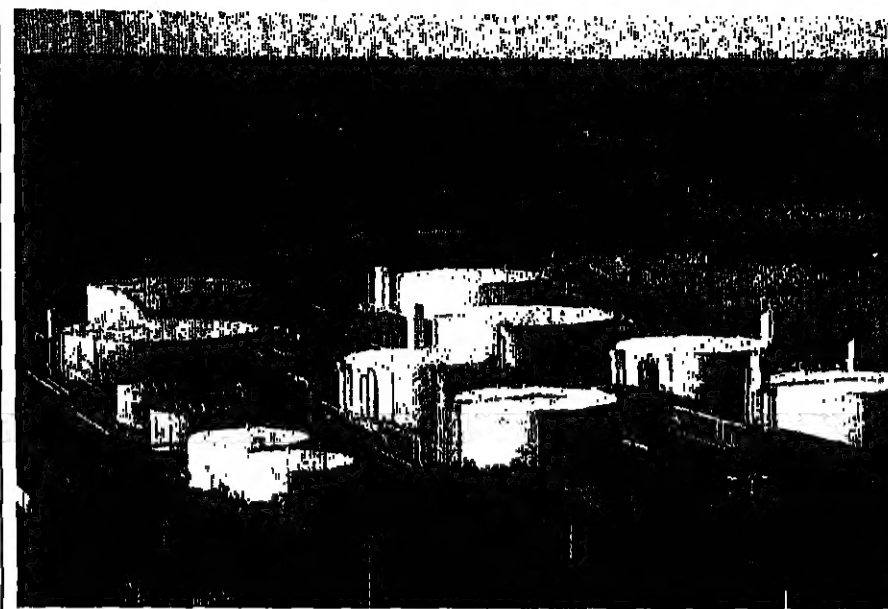
OSBORN describes a world bound by its environment. The traditional U'wa still practise swidden agriculture, moving up from the lower slopes to higher ones according to the season. Their many different myths are performed seasonally, accompanied by rituals led by the *wedhaiya*. Although the tribe has barely enough land for everyone in the reservation, it is largely an unchanging world, in stark contrast to what U'wa leaders refer to as the "ever-changing" nature of white society.

And as part of their cosmology, the U'wa world above is mirrored below the earth. In this inverted universe live shadow people, alter egos of those living on the surface. Here in the underworld, the sun rises in the west and sets in the east. "In psychological terms," wrote Osborn, "this relates with the world of the psyche and the different levels of the conscious and unconscious."

The sense of mystery is everywhere. On reaching puberty, young U'wa women put on head-dresses, or *cocaras*, made of giant leaves from which they can see only through a small slit in the front. They wear them until some one asks to marry them, which can take four or more years. Then there are the 12 meñiras, great standing stones like those at Stonehenge, which Osborn believed were the pillars of the U'wa's spiritual world. U'wa myth says that when the last one falls, the world ends. Only two still stand.

But what about Oxy Osborn doesn't mention it, but the U'wa say they have always had a word for it — *ruñia*. "For them, it is the blood of Mother Earth, the veins of the land," says Edgar Méndez, an anthropologist who has worked with the U'wa for two years. "The invasion of another world into their territory — above or below ground — is death. To extract it would tear their spiritual world apart."

We return from the mountains, stumbling in the dark, having barely been granted access to the U'wa's main communities. Pepe, a semi-pet coyote, is being grilled over wood by a lowland U'wa family that farms an old colonist ranch. Berchá Kubarúwa, president of the traditional U'wa council, swings in a



hammock with a child. In his pocket, he has a "clock" insect that whistles on the U'wa hour. "We had lots of hours before the Spanish came," he quips.

Berchá is weary. "The communities will die," he sighs. "We can't give permission to develop oil. You can't sell Mother Moon. We don't even sell our timber or cattle, so why would we want to try to sell the blood of Mother Earth? For us, the earth is sacred: it is not for violation, exploitation or negotiation; it is to be cared for, to be conserved. The government will sit down with us to see how we can live with Oxy and their oil exploration in our territory, without our culture being destroyed. But for us, this is impossible. We believe that the sun and the moon only work with the earth because she has blood."

If you take out the blood, then you damage the earth and cause imbalance."

Earlier this year, Berchá and Méndez were flown to California by a small US environmental group to confront top Oxy executives at their headquarters. Berchá sat on the edge of the Pacific Ocean, studied it for many hours, and then searched and sang his traditional songs to understand what his history had to say. He told the oilmen how the earth is connected to the sun and the moon. There is no sense that they understood.

The U'wa believe that they are doomed because to extract the oil would be to drain the earth of its blood. They are prepared to die for their beliefs, but they are also increasingly aware that, in cold, practical terms, the effective end of their tribe is more likely to be caused by the guerrilla warfare that accompanies the oil industry in Colombia. They will have no earthly way of defending themselves.

On July 1, war nearly came to the U'wa living in the small community of Casa Roja. At 9am, a column of 30 armed men came up the track, the first guerrillas seen in the area. A military patrol was waiting for them. Two people died in a brief firefight that ended when a plane dropped four bombs within metres of the houses. An U'wa villager, Yaque, shows us the bullet holes in three of her walls. "If oil comes, there will be more of this," she says. "It is inevitable. We will die."

Yaque and the other U'wa base their fears on what has happened in other oilfields, especially the Caño Limón field. A recent report — prepared by local unions, churches, indigenous and human-rights groups — documents

Facing apocalypse: Berchá Kubarúwa (left), president of the U'wa council, who went to Los Angeles to put his case to the oilmen. Development of the Caño Limón oilfield (above) has had disastrous social and ecological consequences. Berchá's homeland is next on the oilmen's list

PHOTOS: PAUL SMITH



there. Rather than accept any responsibility for the chaos, Oxy claims to be a "good neighbour", and points to the social and financial initiatives it has designed to help local communities. The corporation says that in Caño Limón it has paid \$100 million of taxes to the local government in the past 12 years. Oxy is reticent about what will happen to the region when the oil runs out.

Rather than accept that their presence has been responsible for the militarisation of the region, Oxy and Shell blame the guerrillas for the plight of the U'wa. "The U'wa are virtually hostages in their own land, controlled by groups engaged in illegal and murderous acts, including drug and gun trafficking," says Niehaus, Oxy's vice-president. "As a result, they are prevented from making decisions about their future without interference and intimidation — decisions that could make the difference between survival and the extinction of their community." The U'wa reply that they have had no contact with the guerrillas and that they mostly support their struggle. The guerrillas, they say, target the oil companies, not them.

So does Oxy accept that the same social and ecological disasters will take place in Samoré if they and Shell start production? With all the logic of a massive corporation in California, Niehaus says that the U'wa need Oxy and oil. Without the development that the companies will bring, he claims, the U'wa are doomed: "Young people will continue to leave the area to seek opportunities elsewhere, and the communities will not be able to continue their traditional way of life. The simple fact is that U'wa society is changing as a result of complex socio-economic factors that have nothing to do with oil development."

The neo-liberal government still cannot believe that the U'wa will carry out their threats, or that the oil development will be stopped.

Nevertheless, Oxy now suggests it may be able to extract oil without going into U'wa lands, by using advanced technologies to drill horizontally from the side. The U'wa are not impressed, and have raised the stakes by saying that they will now commit suicide if any oil is taken out of their ancestral territory. They are now seeking to have their lands extended.

For Oxy and Shell, it must all be rather confusing. In the can-do global economy of oil and international diplomacy, everyone they have encountered so far has had a price; everything can be negotiated and every situation mediated. The U'wa's position questions their whole presence and exposes their flaws. "They talk a different language and speak from another world," says Méndez.

"The companies talk about social responsibility, but they refuse to accept responsibility for the impact of their work," says Martín von Hildebrand, Colombia's former environment minister who framed the constitutional laws to protect indigenous people's rights in 1991 and who now works with the Gaia Foundation in Bogotá. "Everywhere else, from South America to Africa, they have got what they wanted by taking advantage of the weakness of institutions, playing one group off against another, dividing people, working on the young, and offering gifts. This time, it is not working."

Yesterday's mirrors and beads have become today's roads, health and education centres, says Von Hildebrand. The U'wa are adamant they would prefer to die in dignity rather than lose their identity and their purpose, which is to keep the world alive. Where the whole of Colombian society is being destabilised by the rush to embrace a global economy, they pose unanswerable questions.

The hot afternoon rain pours down in Casa Roja. D, the daughter of a *wedhaiya* who wishes to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals, says that the situation is confusing and dangerous. Are there not simple truths and laws that exist for everyone and everything, she asks. Fundamental laws that cannot be changed on the whim of men in Los Angeles, London or Bogotá?

"I sing the traditional songs to my children," she says. "I teach them that everything is sacred and linked. How can I tell Shell and Oxy that to take the petrol is for us worse than killing your own mother? If you kill the earth, then no one will live. I do not want to die. Nobody does. No, it is not a gesture."

John Vidal

Preacher who forgot his tambourine

SKETCH
Simon Hoggart

TONY BLAIR walked on to the music of Saint-Saëns, specifically the part used as the theme of Babe. This is the popular film about a shy talking piglet who learns to round up flocks of docile, disciplined sheep. Just a coincidence, of course.

The same time was the last music played at Princess Diana's funeral, but I should think that was a coincidence too. Almost certainly.

We had just seen a video depicting Five Months of Glorious Progress. Election promises honoured! Blair Triumphs in Amsterdam! Ragged cheers greeted these heroic declarations, reminding us that New Labour has always had trouble distinguishing between a decision and an achievement.

The Prime Minister walked briskly on stage. The audience rose to him in a standing ovation which turned out, perhaps, to be slightly more enthusiastic than the one at the end.

It was not so much a speech as a presentation; the audience was like an evangelical congregation who wanted to be writhing on the floor in ecstasy, but found that they had a Church of England vicar who didn't even have a tambourine.

By the end, when he was talking about the importance of giving "Make this the giving age..." he sounded as if he was wrapping up the harvest festival. "And I say this to you — vegetable marrows at the back, please." Of course the conference realised they weren't being offered very much in exchange for their giving. He used the phrase "hard choices" or "harsh choices" 11 times, and in the past this has always been Labour government code for "no more money".

So it is today. But under Mr Blair, harshness is also a virtue in itself. "The high ideal of the best schools in the world. Reached through hard choices," he said. (Once again, few verbs. But slightly more this year. Nevertheless, 97 verb-free sentences.)

"It must be a compassionate society. But it is compassion with a hard edge because a strong society cannot be built on soft choices."

Compassion with a hard edge? The razor blade in the duvet! As well as being hard, we must be modern. To be modern is an absolute good in itself, and he used the word 21 times.

There were curious phrases. "The gates of xenophobia falling down", almost Blakean. There was the description of his mood when he won the election and we, the people, called on him to lead us into a new century. "That was your challenge to me. Proudly, humbly, I accepted it."

Vainly, modestly, he set to work. Harshly, compassionately, he took the tough choices. Loudly, softly, he spoke to conference, and fascinated, bored, the audience gave him a standing ovation anyway.



The International Development Secretary, Clare Short, took one of the more dangerous steps of her political career on Brighton beach by donning body armour similar to that worn by Diana, Princess of Wales in Angola to publicise the threat of land-mines. *Comment, page 14*

Blair calls for a 'giving age'

Michael White

TONY BLAIR used his leader's speech to the Labour party conference in Brighton last week to make a high-minded appeal to the British people to cast aside the cynicism and mediocrity of the post-war era and join a selfless national renewal under the banner of "the giving age".

In his first conference speech as prime minister he promised and warned voters that they had elected "a government of high ideals and hard choices". It would push through the changes needed to turn Britain into "a model 21st century nation, a beacon to the world".

"Modernisation is not an end in itself: it is for a purpose. Modernisation is not the enemy of justice, but its ally. Progress and justice are the two rocks upon which the New Britain is raised to the heights." Mr Blair told 2,000 people in the Brighton Centre and the far wider TV audience — to whom much of his speech was addressed.

There was a tough economic message beneath the surface of his 6,000-word text, coupled with a social conservatism that elevated discipline and duty, denounced industrial conflict — "partnership is

the key" — and elevated family life. The aim was for a compassionate society. "But it is with compassion with a hard edge because a strong society cannot be built on soft choices."

Mr Blair spoke of a huge social problem in re-establishing family life as the bedrock of society. He said: "Attitudes have changed. The world has changed. But I am a modern man leading a modern country and this is a modern crisis."

The Home Secretary, Jack Straw, will chair a new ministerial committee to strengthen the family, and the radical plans of the Social Security Minister, Frank Field, for ending welfare dependency and curbing state involvement in pensions — the subject of growing tension in Whitehall — will produce a green paper before Christmas. "The new welfare state must encourage work, not dependency," Mr Blair warned.

Mr Blair's determination that a Labour government will serve two full terms shone through the speech. He again warned against complacency — and revealed an agenda much bigger than a celebration of Labour's 179-seat Commons majority.

The Prime Minister, lavishly praising "the richness of the British character" in his opening passage, called it "creative, compassionate,

outward-looking. Old British values, but a new British confidence. We can never be the biggest, we may never again be the mightiest. But we can be the best."

There were also hard nuggets of policy development in the hour-long performance. Mr Blair rattled off a list of reforms which his ministers had either set in train or implemented since election day — ranging from the handgun ban and devolution to tax changes and the Northern Ireland peace process.

He also announced new initiatives, including a target of 500,000 more people in higher and further education by 2002 and more low-cost access to the Internet for schoolchildren.

As the Prime Minister moved towards his peroration he linked Labour values with "the best of British values" and called on the entire country to make a supreme national effort to help modernise it.

For a party leader who had just won an historic landslide, Mr Blair's speech was notably light on triumphalism, but it was heavy on high-minded ambition, almost religious in tone and decidedly low-key.

Hugo Young, page 14
Washington Post, page 16

Minister wins fees battle

The Education Secretary, David Blunkett, won overwhelming support from delegates at the Labour conference for the Government's plans to charge means-tested tuition fees for full-time undergraduates from September 1998. A threatened constituency rebellion failed to materialise.

Cash to clear land-mines

Ministers unveiled policy initiatives designed to help rid the world of land-mines during a debate on the scope of Labour's ethical foreign policy. The Defence Secretary, George Robertson, announced the creation of a mines information and training centre, and the International Development Secretary, Clare Short, and the Foreign Secretary, Robin Cook, said they would double the sums available for global mine clearance to £10 million a year.

Ulster arrest powers curbed

The Northern Ireland Secretary, Mo Mowlam, vowed to end a "legacy of unfairness and injustice" when she announced a new bill that will scrap the controversial power of internment, reviled by Northern Ireland's nationalist community.

Mandelson in low pay row

Trade unions reacted in fury to a suggestion by the Minister without Portfolio, Peter Mandelson, that there would be a lower minimum wage for young workers, pre-empting recommendations by the Government's Low Pay Commission, which is due to report next spring.

Prescott alters rail sale rules

Parts of the rail network could be returned to public ownership, the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, told delegates. In a move that sidestepped calls for a return to full nationalisation, Mr Prescott tore up rules that excluded the public sector from running passenger railway services.

Hint of more cash for NHS

Tony Blair hinted that the Government will find more money for the National Health Service to stave off a winter beds crisis. His comments came in the wake of a warning by doctors that patients may have to see their GP in the light of Labour's determination not to raise income tax to improve NHS funding.

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Gays win historic pay ruling

Clare Dyer

HOMOSEXUALS scored an historic victory at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg last week, in a test case over the denial of job perks to same-sex partners.

In a preliminary opinion, advocate general Michael Elmer held that South West Trains Ltd's denial of travel concessions to the woman partner of Lisa Grant, a ticket clerk, breached European law guaranteeing equal pay.

The case has far-reaching implications for employment rights in Britain. If the full court follows the opinion (which it does in four out of

five cases), employers will have to offer same-sex partners the same perks, including pension benefits, available to unmarried partners of the opposite sex. Pay includes any benefits in cash or kind provided by an employer.

Ruth Harvey, Ms Grant's solicitor, said companies would have to look at all aspects of pay — salary, pensions, loans, mortgages and benefits — or risk claims against them.

However, the ruling could lead employers to limit perks to married partners. The advocate general held that this would not be contrary to European Union law. Nor would it be unlawful under English law.

Ms Grant, aged 38, who lives in

Southampton with her partner Jillian Percy, a nurse aged 30, went to an industrial tribunal after she was refused concessions worth £1,000 a year for Ms Percy. Her predecessor in the job had received free and out-price travel for his unmarried female partner.

The case was referred by the tribunal to the European Court where Ms Grant, represented by Cherie Booth QC, claimed the refusal breached article 119 of the EC treaty, which guarantees equal pay. After a definitive ruling by the court, the case will go back to the tribunal for a final decision in about six months.

The advocate general said that discrimination could not be justified

on the basis that an employer wanted to benefit heterosexual but not homosexual couples. He also ruled that article 119 could be directly applied by courts and tribunals in Britain. If the full court agrees, this opens the way for tribunals to decide similar cases without reference to Europe.

Ms Percy said afterwards: "We're ecstatic. It's more than we could have hoped for... We knew we were changing the law. It has been a hard campaign but well worth it."

Angela Mason, director of Stonewall, which campaigns for equal rights for homosexuals, said: "We are all absolutely delighted. This is an historic day for lesbian and gay rights, not just in this country but in the whole of the European Union."

The opinion follows a ruling from the Luxembourg court extending

protection from discrimination at work to transsexuals. Lawyers believe this will pave the way for a ruling protecting homosexuals from any sort of discrimination at work.

Advocate general Elmer concluded: "Equality before the law is a fundamental principle... The rights and duties which result from EU law apply to all without discrimination, and therefore also to the approximately 35 million citizens of the EU who are homosexual."

Following a report by the Human Rights Commission of the European Court of Justice saying that Britain's age of consent law discriminates against homosexuals, the Government is to allow a free vote by MPs on whether to reduce the homosexual age of consent from 18 to 16 — bringing it in line with the legal age for heterosexual acts.

Police review after death of CS victim

Owen Bowcott, Sebastian Nield and Duncan Campbell

POLICE use of CS sprays should be urgently reviewed, a coroner said last week, after a verdict of unlawful killing on a Gambian footballer who was asphyxiated face down in an east London police station.

The recommendation came at the end of a 4½-week inquest into Ibrahim Sey, whose death in police custody is likely to heighten concerns about police restraint techniques and the treatment of black suspects. The decision was the third time in the past two years in which Metropolitan Police officers have been involved in an unlawful killing.

Mr Sey, aged 29 and an asylum seeker, died in March last year just two weeks after the force began testing incapacitant sprays. The call by the coroner, Dr Harold Price, for all police forces to review their use of CS solvent will increase pressure on the Home Office to reconsider the issue.

Mr Sey — who had briefly been a police officer in Gambia and played for the country's Under 25 squad — had begun to struggle while in police custody after being arrested following a domestic incident. He was brought down and handcuffed with his arms behind his back. When he continued to struggle, police used a CS spray.

"He was drinking and sucking it in and it appeared not to have an effect," WPC Jackie Cannon told the court. He was carried face down into a custody suite and placed on the floor.

At that point he appeared to relax and did not respond. An ambulance was called but when it arrived several minutes later, the paramedics found him still handcuffed in the prone position. He was dead on arrival at hospital.

The hearing was the latest in a series of police custody deaths associated with "positional asphyxia" where suspects were handcuffed with their arms behind their back.

CS is intended to be used for violent or life-threatening incidents, not merely to facilitate arrests. Chief police officers' guidelines on CS incapacitant specify that "prisoners must not be left... in a prone, face-down position. The suspect should be carefully monitored until the effects of CS have worn off."

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In these baffling and demoralising times, the Israelis and Palestinians need good friends and good advice. It may be a matter for regret that the international convention and preponderance of power have cast the United States as the best friend available. But since this is so, it places a premium on Washington to provide strong support and clear encouragement for the peace process. The Palestinians, though well aware of the historical bias towards Israel, value what has been achieved through US good offices and hope for more consistent treatment. Yet that is exactly what is missing under the new administration. Madeleine Albright headed for Israel last month sounding one-sided in Mr Netanyahu's favour. In the end she said more to please the Palestinians than they had expected. She repeated her call for a "time-out" on new Jewish settlements recently when Mr Netanyahu announced plans for new units in Efrat. Then last week she inexplicably described settlement-building as "legal". What is illegal is attempted murder on foreign soil by agents using false passports. If Ms Albright is to create any impression of US impartiality, she should condemn what happened in Amman as loudly as she has denounced the terrorism of Hamas. And most important, the US has to become a more consistent broker, or ask others to take up the task.

Uncool views on global warming

THE WORLD has a surplus of greenhouse gases but a deficit of specific targets for their reduction. That is the task the Earth Summit follow-up conference sought to tackle in June, and which Bill Clinton addressed on Monday in a White House special conference. The aim is to firm up Washington's position ahead of the United Nations sponsored meeting in Kyoto in two months' time. Unless an international consensus on hard objectives can be cobbléd together, Kyoto will fail. The collective commitment first made in Rio five years ago will be seen to have lapsed and there is little chance of staging a second mobilisation.

Whether the main developing countries such as India and China should also accept restrictions will be a contentious issue in Kyoto. They argue that it is the developed countries which have produced 75 per cent of greenhouse gases in this century. The West replies that these new industrial tigers will soon generate more emissions and must be curbed now (while at the same time urging them on to ever faster growth). How to solve this contradiction will be difficult anyhow. There will be no chance at all if the rich countries take refuge in more selfish evasions. As Tony Blair said at the June summit, "If we fail in Kyoto, we fail our children . . . We must all deliver on the commitments we make."

Rush to tarnish Diana's memory

The publication of Mr Morton's book poses issues of greater magnitude. Any funds raised by *Ma Shor's* efforts will go solely to help the victims of war. Mr Morton has promised to make a donation of undisclosed size in memory of Diana, but no one is disputing that he, his publishers and the bookshops will profit hugely. The matter would not end even in the unlikely event that they gave all the proceeds to charity. For publication of this revised version involves the release of new and very personal information about Diana and others close to her who are still alive. It is not just a matter of revealing "the methodology behind the book", as its author claims. He also argues that failure to reveal her role in the original book would be "to dishonour her memory". Diana will surely be remembered for much more substantial contributions to life. There is also the question of timing. Mr Morton protests that he did not start discussing a new edition with his publisher until the end of the week after the fatal accident. A week may be a long time in today's media world, but that still seems like extraordinarily indecent haste.

Who governs Britain: parliament or people?

Hugo Young

If the people are the source of every piece of legislative wisdom from tuition fees to an independent Bank, what price minority causes that the majority take no part in? When the people's will is the supreme test, why should the Government give a single cent to Coven-

It is possible that New Labour wishes to give more formal recognition to the people. Some of their leaders talked, before the election, of a case for more plebiscitary democracy. More referendums are coming forth from this Government than in history, often rightly. It is gaining in seem more likely than that both the European single currency and the Westminster electoral system will be submitted to popular opinion before the next election.

Every time I heard about the people last week, I felt more inclined to reach for my book of quotations. Cuijin (735-804 AD) was a poet who started: "Those people should not be listened to who keep saying, 'The voice of the people is the voice of God, since the riotousness of the crowd is always very close to the truthness.' Better still, a more recent epigrammatist (#1979-90) can be adapted; there is no such thing as The People. There are only men and women. Everything else is just a slender artifice."

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Washington Considers Mission to Congo

John M. Goshko in New York

According to the sources, Secretary General Kofi Annan has agreed to give the mission two weeks to see what it can accomplish before the

The U.S. initiative arose in discussions between U.S. officials and Annan, whose difficulties in gauging Kabila's intentions about cooperating with the investigation caused him last week to order the four team leaders to New York for consultations. Annan acted in the wake of reports from the Reuters news agency and an African-based agency that Kabila had called for the U.N. team to leave the country.

Reuters retraction said, was made at a September 29 banquet. No explanation was given of why Reuters had sent out the original report.

U.N. officials said that while Annan had been concerned by the

It was in that context, sources said, that Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, broached to Annan the possibility of an American mission. Richardson traveled to Kinshasa earlier this

While Kabila initially agreed to a U.N. probe, he has restricted the team's ability to move outside Kinshasa and has insisted on conditions that effectively would cripple the investigation. As the impasse has dragged on, the United States, members of the European Community and other nations have tied the promise of much-needed assistance to Congolese cooperation with the investigation.



Male bonding . . . Promise Keepers pray at the Mall in Washington during preparations for last weekend's mass gathering of men who belong to the evangelical Christian movement PHOTO MARK WILSON

When It's All Right to Stand By Your Man

OPINION
E. J. Dionne Jr.

over what their role is supposed to be," she said in an interview last week. "Women are changing and coming more assertive, and right so. But we have to acknowledge that this has created a confusing situation for men . . . This movement is very complex, as many restorative movements are."

Her advice to her fellow feminists is to "engage the Promise Keepers in public discussion". In a cross-section world, Skocpol's view is a bracing acknowledgement that you neither have to love nor hate a movement.

On the matter of women's roles in the group draws inspiration from St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians: "Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as to the Lord. For he is the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the Church."

...We, Promise Keepers, to embrace an assertively right-wing, anti-feminist message, it would justify the fears of its critics — but also risk losing many members who seek not political propaganda but transforming religious experiences akin to that offered by Billy Graham's Crusades!

For now, Skocpol has the right approach: to admire the good thing Promise-Keepers do while insisting they're dead wrong if they say that you have to be opposed to feminism to honor the family — or fathers.

But NATO's other members are balking at the idea of paying \$16 billion or more — their estimate of the share of expansion costs — at a time when economic austerity measures and the lack of a visible threat make the cause of larger defense budgets politically unpopular.

At the same time, there are strong doubts that the three new members will be able to afford the \$17-billion investment the Clinton administration believes the three together must make to bring their defenses up to NATO standards.

Defense ministers from Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic sought to dispel any fears that public support for joining NATO might be flagging or that they are not prepared to make the financial sacrifices necessary to upgrade their military forces.

The Czechs, in particular, have been criticized because of their defense spending and recent surveys that suggest less than half of all voters endorse membership in NATO.

NATO Allies Row With U.S. Over Costs of Enlargement

William Drozdak in Maastricht

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A Grumpy Old Man Reflects

Thomas M. Disch

TIMEQUAKE
By Kurt Vonnegut
Putnam, 219pp. \$23.95.

TIMEQUAKE is a novel by, and starring, Kurt Vonnegut. His co-star, and virtually the only other "character" in the book, is his alter ego, Kilgore Trout, who figured in two earlier Vonnegut novels, *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* (1965) and *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). Trout has also published his own novel, *Venus On the Half Shell* (1975), but since it was written, without Vonnegut's consent, by Philip Jose Farmer, that book cannot legally be accounted part of the Trout oeuvre, though it enjoys its own peculiar and illegitimate glory as one of the few novels published by a non-entirely.

It may be that the concept for Timequake is a steal from Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. (Vonnegut discreetly acknowledges as much.) In a nutshell, everyone on Earth has to relive the 1930s on automatic pilot, observing but not participating in their lives. But what Wilder made poignant, Vonnegut simply doesn't engage with, for he refuses to deal either with the helplessness and/or

horror of such an experience or with the trauma of release. No matter — intensity was never Vonnegut's forte. And anyhow Wilder had already done it.

What Vonnegut does, which no one can do better, is give a big post-modern shrug. The experience is shifted to the expert shoulders of Trout, who represents his creator's self-love and self-loathing at a level of imaginative intensity that mere memoir would not allow.

And that is not to reckon with the man's immense self-regard. Vonnegut namedrops like a rainstorm: A.E. Hotchner, Heinrich Boll, Dick Francis, Günter Grass, Andrei Sakharov, and a host of showbiz stars that his own celebrity has brought within a handshake's distance. The extended Vonnegut family is all on hand, as at a wedding, each with a characterizing anecdote. The author's bibliography and the salient facts of his public career are offered as candidly as on a resume.

And then there are the sentences: There shall be no more war, we must love one another, etc. He echoes Henry Ford, echoing John Steinbeck, echoing Eugene Debs, that as long as there is anyone poor or downtrodden or in prison, he, Kurt Vonnegut, is poor, downtrodden, and imprisoned, too. Oh dear, as Vonnegut might say.

Of his writerly life we learn that he still works, virtuously, on a manual typewriter, corrects his copy with pencil and then mails these pages off to his long-term professional typist in the country. This necessitates a walk first to the store, to buy a single manila envelope, and then to the post office, where he waits in line to buy a stamp. The process becomes a parody of Vonnegut's rectitude and unassuming human dignity relative to those boobs among us who use computers and fax machines or play the lottery.

If all this seems insufferably smug, it is, but since it comes from Vonnegut, America's favorite grumpy old man, you've got to love him. He has so cornered the market on elderly curmudgeonliness that his very belches (and there are plenty of them, including three or four really moldy dirty jokes) have a fragrance of *temps perdu*.

In a well-advised "Prologue," Vonnegut forewarns his readers that Timequake took 10 years to write, at the end of which, 74 years old, "I found myself in the winter of 1996... the creator of a novel which did not work, which had no point, and which had never wanted to be

written... Let us think of it as Timequake. And let us think of this one, a stew made from its best parts mixed with thoughts and experiences during the past seven months or so, as Timequake Two. Hokay?"

Hokay with me. The fact is that Vonnegut's fame and bankability are such that he is beyond rejection or even criticism. As for Trout — now a hack sci-fi writer in his eighties — though reduced to the condition and appearance of a bag lady he's still going strong, churning out unpublishable stories full of idiot-savant wisdom. His stories are, in synopsis, truly stupid, and we must be grateful that Vonnegut has had the discernment to imagine rather than write them.

And yet, as with Mortimer Snerd, it is Trout who may be the more memorable character. He is one of those, like Forrest Gump or Sherlock Holmes, who take their creator captive and become the boss. Even Vonnegut seems to be aware of this, for if the book has any message, it is that offered by Trout: "You were sick, but now you're well again, and there's work to do."

One may have doubts about this as a panacea to the world's problems. But as solace, it's on a par with Voltaire's advice, as mediated through Candide, that we should tend to our own affairs, a counsel of perfection to which the reader can only answer, Hokay.

Wild Ride Into Horror

Rachel Pastan

MAN CRAZY
By Joyce Carol Oates
Dutton, 282pp. \$23.95.

THERE ARE things I pocket. I don't have to say about them. Carol Oates's latest novel, *Man Crazy*, is that it is a lyrical and, I think, powerful; that it tells the story of a woman who, curbed by circumstances, seems destined to come to a bad end.

I don't have to say these things, because they were true of Oates last novel as well, and the one before that. Oates's themes are as established and her voice as recognizable as those of any American writer living. On the one hand, this is a tribute. On the other, it raises the bar. She has to find ways to surprise us — to keep us wondering what will happen next.

Man Crazy, like so many of Oates's novels, immerses us immediately in brutality. It's brought to the hospital in a "shackles," the narrator, Lucy Boone, begins. She goes on to describe how she stabbed herself with a cheap tin fork, how she has always had the habit of self-mutilation. The story then jumps backward, recounting Lucy's lonely and sometimes violent childhood, tracing her descent into a pathological, active passivity that leads first to promiscuity and later to involvement with a Satanic cult. Lucy's mother is a big, but alcoholic beauty, her father a former fighter pilot and fugitive from justice.

It is never clear exactly why they have to hide out at a dismal lodge in upstate New York, except that it's good background for a little girl. Oates wants to tell, indeed much of the novel's causality remains murky, the story jumping free episode to episode. The language washes over us and lulls us even as the action shocks us, and the dialogue between the two — the most effective aspect of the book — seems to interest Oates more than the complications of narrative.

For Lucy's story seems not so much to unfold as to repeat itself, descending into horror. Her world is so dismal and her approach to it so passive that I grew frustrated, wanting Lucy herself, and not just the writing, to compel me on.

For there is certainly wonderful writing here. The dialogue is terrific, the descriptions of the Chautauqu River dark and sensual. There are brilliant turns of phrase as when Lucy describes herself as "sitting tense and erect in my skeleton" as she waits for her initiation into the Children of Satan.

In a brief chapter, Lucy relates her father's theory that, for a girl, there is the time on the ground and the time in the air. "When you're in the air... everything goes white, roaring, collapsed, blind." It seems to me that this is what Oates wants to create in her fiction, and does so brilliantly — the crazy sensation of flying in an open cockpit, where the world dashes by in a roar of future and sensation, not quite needing to make sense. If you open your eyes and look around while you're reading Man Crazy, you may have the sense that you aren't going anywhere. But if you shut your eyes and give yourself up to it, the novel will take you on a dark and wild ride.

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Investors have never had it so good. Can it last, or is disaster about to strike? Paul Murphy reports

Stocks and cheers

JOSEPH E GRANVILLE is all set. Bermuda shorts, box of cigars... Stocks are going up and he is planning a holiday. The man is an investment pundit who presents a hugely popular radio show in Kansas. According to his predictions, the Dow Jones Industrial Average — the key United States stock market index, which charts the progress of the country's biggest companies — will break through the 10,000 mark early in the New Year.

So Mr Granville has formed the Dow 10,000 club, and all the members are taking a celebratory three-day cruise on The Sovereign Of The Seas (73,000 tons, 2,900 passengers). Lots of other stock market pundits will be on board, and for an extra \$180 "tuition fee" on top of the basic \$872-per-cabin cost, happy cruisers will be able to attend seminars fronted by speakers from an outfit known as The Personal Capitalist. And, according to a travel agent's flier, there is also the promise of Mr Granville himself giving "another one of his famous stock market lectures replete with all his newest recommendations".

Any investor who has followed Mr Granville's advice over the past 15 months or so should be able to afford the cruise. In July last year, when the Dow Jones index stood at 5,170, he told his followers to start buying shares. Then, in April this year, with the Dow standing at 6,315, the man told everyone to fill their boots. The Dow is going to

10,000 by January, Mr Granville declared.

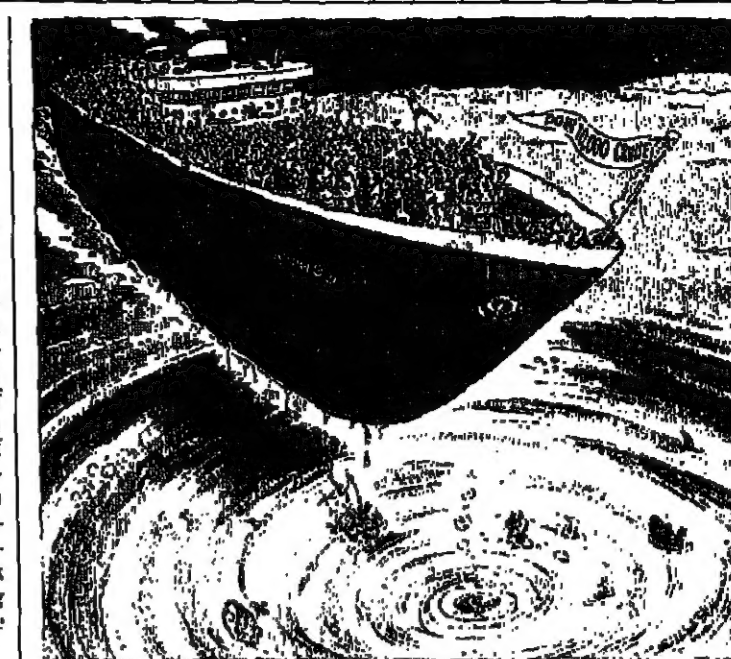
At the time he looked like another stock market quack in a country thick with quackish "investment gurus". The professionals — hard-headed Wall Street types who spend their days analysing every piece of information which might impact on share prices — were talking then of a stock market crash. They had listened to Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve and undisputed "master" of the world financial system, when he said that stock market investors were displaying "irrational exuberance". They were waiting for interest rates to go up.

The idea that the Dow index might jump by two-thirds was, well, the sort of thing some Kansas radio celebrity would come up with. But with three months to go, the Dow 10,000 Club is looking less and less like a bunch of cultists heading for a messy suicide.

Recent weeks have seen the most dramatic stock market explosion — ripping through London as well as New York — that the financial world has seen. Last week, the Dow burst through 8,000, marking a 27 per cent rise this year. Britain's own version of the Dow, the FTSE 100 index, surged through 5,300 on Thursday last week. The next day, the index jumped 180 points in one trading session — the second biggest one-day surge. The Footsie has rocketed 30 per cent this year as a jaw-dropping \$400 billion has been added to the value of Britain's top 100 firms.

Such a feeding frenzy has never been seen before in the major Western financial centres. And, disturbingly, there is very little agreement on what is fuelling the markets. But whatever the cause, and whatever valuation yardsticks market analysts choose to use, shares are now more expensive than ever before. And on the two or three occasions in history when share prices have been close to current value levels, something has happened: the markets have crashed.

Most investment professionals use past stock market history to help them predict the future, and so many have spent the past 18 months growing increasingly bearish. If history says — as it does — that share prices are over-valued and waiting



to collapse, the natural inclination is to get out of the stock market.

The most respected names in the British fund management industry have followed this logic — Carol Galley of Mercury Asset Management, Tony Dye of IDFM and Paul Myers of Gartmore.

Sally, the "opportunity cost" of being underweight in the stock market when share prices are soaring has run to billions of dollars for the positions these fund managers manage. Others have been bearish, as well. From individual punters in the futures market to Warren Buffett, the legendary US investor, word has come: "stock markets are over-cooked".

BUT prices have continued to rise, lending an air of unreality. All the time, takeover deals and corporate mergers have become increasingly extravagant, culminating in last week's news that a 13-year-old telecoms company called WorldCom — built through 150 acquisitions — is offering shares worth \$30 billion to take over MCI, the US telecoms group that British Telecom was hoping to merge with (see story below).

Suddenly, some of those British bears who have been warning of a crash have begun to revise their views. Talk in the City is now all about interest rates falling and how a weaker pound will help British exporters.

The stock market is described as "under-pinned," and yet there is evidence of cracking. Share prices have not gone up in a straight line; there have been leaps and bounds,

periods of vicious volatility. Many trading houses have been losing money as a result. There is little doubt that both last week's news that BZW, the investment banking arm of Barclays Bank, is up for sale and last month's announcement that Wall Street powerhouse Salomon Brothers is being taken over by the Travelers financial conglomerate were to a large extent brought on by the extreme conditions.

Worryingly, informed sources among City regulators say that the Securities and Futures Authority — the City watchdog that monitors all securities businesses — is working at full stretch, fighting potential and real fires across the Square Mile.

In short, the stock market is stressed. Experienced traders use words like "barking" and "harmy". There is a constant search for the "event" which might trigger a meltdown that will destroy investor confidence. Some pointed to the currency crisis that has swept through the Far East over the past two months; others have plumped for the Indonesian bush fires.

History shows the potential damage to investors' wealth. After the 1929 Wall Street crash, it took 25 years for share prices to regain their pre-crash levels.

There is an old stock market rule which says that equities always climb a wall of worry, but there is also a rule which says if you are worried about a stock, sell it and stop worrying.

Joe Granville and his Dow 10,000 gang would scoff at such advice, but the message is clear: stick to dry land.

In Brief

THE crisis of confidence in Southeast Asian currencies returned as Indonesia's rupiah fell to a record low. It has devalued 50 per cent against the dollar in little more than four months. Even the region's most robust currency, the Singapore dollar, sank to a 40-month low.

FEARS that the Japanese economy is teetering on the brink of its first recession for 23 years were heightened as the country's most comprehensive and authoritative business survey revealed top executives expect conditions to deteriorate further in the coming months.

A NEW petrol price war was signalled by Shell as the oil group announced 3,000 managerial redundancies in its European retail operations. The shake-up will see Shell buying other service station chains and swapping assets with rivals across Europe.

BARCLAYS has confirmed that it is pulling out of large parts of its City banking activities. It is to sell its equities and corporate finance divisions and said it hoped to find a buyer for BZW "within a few months". Analysts said the sale could raise \$800 million.

MICROSOFT has launched its new Internet software — Internet Explorer 4 — in the latest version of what has been dubbed "the browser wars". The company has been locked in a battle with rivals Netscape for the past two years for domination of the market for Internet software.

NORTHERN ROCK, the UK-based building society, made a spectacular stock market debut when its shares soared to a peak of 470p, bringing windfalls of £2,350 (£3,800) to about half a million members.

THE SALE of Moccasin, the world's oldest bullion bank, to Canada's Bank of Nova Scotia for an undisclosed sum puts London's twice-daily gold-price fixing under majority foreign control for the first time.

FOREIGN EXCHANGES

	Sterling rates October 6	Sterling rates September 23
Australia	2.2966-2.2964	2.2459-2.2499
Austria	13.99-20.01	16.99-20.01
Belgium	69.61-68.83	58.62-58.72
Canada	2.2306-2.2328	2.2372-2.2384
Denmark	10.91-10.82	10.82-10.83
France	6.55-6.55	9.34-9.35
Germany	2.8400-2.8438	2.8419-2.8445
Hong Kong	12.47-12.48	12.50-12.51
Ireland	1.1057-1.1081	1.1042-1.1064
Italy	2.785-2.788	2.781-2.784
Japan	168.20-168.41	105.42-105.87
Netherlands	3.1907-3.2031	3.2005-3.2039
New Zealand	2.5438-2.5389	2.6341-2.6377
Norway	11.26-11.37	11.45-11.46
Portugal	265.71-260.48	260.47-268.61
Spain	239.97-240.23	240.12-240.31
Sweden	12.13-12.14	12.21-12.23
Switzerland	2.3417-2.3443	2.3458-2.3487
USA	1.0125-1.0134	1.0160-1.0170
ECU	1.4501-1.4522	1.4502-1.4520

FTSE100 Share Index up 75.7 at 5300.5, FTSE250 Index up 11.3 at 4064.4. Gold up \$4.18 at \$323.25.

Strong and Silent Star

Wendy Smith

PICKFORD
The Woman Who Made Hollywood
By Eileen Whitfield
University Press of Kentucky,
441pp. \$25.

MARY PICKFORD'S unfairly remembered as a ringleted actress who played angelic children in maudlin silent movies. Canadian journalist Eileen Whitfield's excellent biography reclaims her from cliché, arguing persuasively that her films — and performances — are better than their reputation. Whitfield paints a nuanced, three-dimensional portrait of a complex woman whose story is a fascinating case study of a seminal period in Hollywood history.

Pickford entered the world as Gladys Louise Smith on April 8, 1892, in Toronto. Her father died when she was five; less than two years later she appeared in her first play, quickly becoming the financial mainstay for her beloved mother, Charlotte, and younger siblings. Apprenticeship in such melodramatic classics as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *East Lynne*, followed by five grueling years touring North America, completed her transformation into a mini-adult whose ability to incarnate youngsters onstage was remarkable for one who'd had little direct experience of carefree childhood.

By the time she bluffed her way into the office of Broadway producer David Belasco, who gave her the stage name Mary Pickford and put her in a hit play, the 15-year-old actress was a seasoned professional whose delicate, vulnerable beauty barely masked an iron will and ferocious ambition. Whitfield deduces that her theater acting was already simpler and more concerned with inner emotional truth than the period's conventional showy posturing. A lively account of her initial 1909 meeting with film director D.W. Griffith depicts a disdainful Pickford, convinced she was slum-

ming for money, pricked in her pride and creative conscience: "Pickford liked to be excellent... [she sensed] that translating stage acting onto celluloid demanded a sea change in technique."

Pickford develops that technique. "Thoughts passed across her face like shadows, and she let them speak for her," writes Whitfield, who credits Pickford with doing as an actor what Griffith did as a director, intuitively grasping the artistic possibilities of this new medium and creating a new style to fulfill them. Astute analyses of Pickford's most famous roles — the Poor Little Rich Girl, Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm and the Little Princess, to name only a few — point out that she perfected the blend of pathos and slapstick humor that Charlie Chaplin later made his trademark, and that her characters were usually feisty, streetwise adolescents, not innocent little girls. Whitfield contends that sanitized 1930s remakes of those three pictures by baby star Shirley Temple have tainted memories of Pickford's tougher interpretations.

She was tough off screen too, with a shrewd sense of her commercial value. "America's Sweetheart" was the most famous woman in the world in 1917, when she set off to sell war bonds with Chaplin and Douglas Fairbanks, who became her second husband in 1920. (The international appeal of their films made these three the first truly modern celebrities.) Any movie mogul who thought he could get away with paying her less than she was worth was speedily disillusioned. Her 1916 contract with Adolph Zukor's Famous Players gave her half a million dollars a year or half her films' net profits (whichever was greater), her own production company, the right to choose her directors and a voice in the final cut. Three years later, she created United Artists with Chaplin, Fairbanks, Griffith and western star William S. Hart. This distribution vehicle for the principals' wholly owned productions prompted the



Mary Pickford: First celebrity of the modern age

wisecrack "the lunatics have taken charge of the asylum."

She had less command over her personal life. Her substance-abusing siblings were a constant source of embarrassment and potential scandal. Her primary commitment to her mother sabotaged her first marriage, and Charlotte's death in 1928 probably triggered her long slide into alcoholism. She and Fairbanks ruled Hollywood from Pickfair, their mansion on Summit Drive, but the marriage foundered as the talkies swept silent films' royalty into professional oblivion and psychological drift. Whitfield's account of the couple's lurching trajectory toward a 1936 di-

vorice neither of them really wanted is quietly heartbreaking, as is her gentle depiction of Pickford's final marriage, to the selflessly devoted Buddy Rogers (whom she frequently called "Douglas").

Pickford died in 1979, an alcoholic recluse so dismissive of her work that she once threatened to burn all her movies. Many have in fact been lost, and the others — like most silent stars — are often shown in badly deteriorated prints, dubbed with awful music. How fortunate, then, that the loving descriptions in this well-informed and passionate biography recapture the essence of those films, and of Mary Pickford's pioneering artistry.

BT mounts fightback against WorldCom's \$30bn bid for MCI

Alex Brummer

BRITISH Telecom is planning to mount an aggressive campaign against WorldCom's surprise \$30 billion paper offer for the United States long-distance telecoms group MCI as part of effort to sustain its global strategy.

The BT management believes that the offer by Bernard Ebbers of WorldCom is highly vulnerable to a stock market shakeout, and could be held up for a year by regulatory interference on both sides of the Atlantic — whereas BT's combination will be fully in place by January 1998.

But even if BT finds itself gawped by WorldCom's short-term opportunism, it believes

the UK telecoms group has a good chance of rapidly putting together an alternative, with the dominant US long-distance carrier AT&T seen as a potential partner. AT&T is understood to have expressed private interest in a deal with BT already, which would cut it in on the UK group's series of European partnerships.

Despite the City's euphoria over WorldCom's intervention — BT shares rose sharply on the news of the counterbid — BT chairman Sir Iain Vallance and chief executive Peter Bonfield believe that the decision for the MCI board, which was due to meet in Washington this week, will be far closer than the paper difference suggested by the two offers.

If MCI accepts the WorldCom

offer, it will receive paper selling at an exceptionally high price-earnings ratio of 44, which will be extremely vulnerable to any reversal in the stock market.

Given that MCI's shareholders may have to wait for more than a year while the Federal Communications Commission and the European Commission examine the bid on competition grounds, the risks associated with WorldCom's paper offer may appear too great.

If and when BT goes public in its opposition to the WorldCom offer — it is currently barred from comment by US bidding rules — it may also draw attention to the role in the proposed deal of investment banker Salomon's.

After Salomon's equity opera-

tion reportedly took a large loss on MCI options after the disclosure of its problems in breaking into local phone markets, the banker emerged as adviser to WorldCom on its higher offer.

The main task for Sir Iain will be to convince BT and MCI shareholders that, while the WorldCom deal might look a good option over the short term, a dent between BT and MCI — which already has accumulated up to \$2 billion of business through its Concert partnership — has real promise for the short to medium term.

It is the prospect of building on BT's European presence that is proving a magnet to both AT&T and some of the American Baby Bells, the regional service providers in the US.

The Dow is 10,000

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10/10/97

French apology underlines Vatican's silence

COMMENT
Henri Tincq

ON SEPTEMBER 30, at a ceremony on the site of the Drancy deportation camp near Paris, high-ranking Catholic churchmen made a public apology for the French Church's attitude towards Jews during the last war.

The symbolic force of clasped Christian and Jewish hands recalled other great acts of reconciliation — Chancellor Willy Brandt kneeling in front of the Warsaw Ghetto Memorial in 1970, President François Mitterrand and Chancellor Helmut Kohl standing silently side by side at Verdun cemetery in 1984, and President Jacques Chirac admitting, on July 16, 1995, France's "collective offence" in organising the rounding up of Jews at the Vel d'Hiv stadium exactly 53 years earlier.

Much had already been done to bring Jews and Christians together before the ceremony. But on this occasion the French Catholic hierarchy made a clean breast of what happened in the past and publicly repented.

German, Polish and French bishops have now acknowledged their wrongs. This only makes the silence of the Vatican all the more deafening — and paradoxical. No Pope before John Paul II was as insistent in urging his hierarchy to beg forgiveness for past wrongdoings and wipe the Church's slate clean. According to Luigi Accattoli, an expert on the Vatican, the Pope has delivered almost 100 speeches of "repentance" relating to a wide variety of issues, from the Crusades and the Inquisition to the wars of religion and the slave trade; a veritable avalanche of remorse and soul-searching.

In the presence of Jewish leaders at Castelgandolfo, in Italy, in September 1987, the Pope promised he would draw up a statement on the Church's responsibility for anti-Semitism and the Holocaust. Ten years on, he has still not put his name, on behalf of the Church as a whole, to a document similar to those signed by French, German and Polish bishops.

Until his 1987 pledge, the Pope's initiatives had both amazed and irked the Jewish community. They included the canonisation in 1981 of Father Maximilian Kolbe, a notoriously anti-Semitic Pole who died in Auschwitz, and the beatification in



Hands on... Rabbi Joseph Sitruk, right, shakes hands with Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger at a ceremony at Drancy, a former deportation camp near Paris, last week

1987 of another Auschwitz victim, the German philosopher Edith Stein, a Jew who became a Carmelite nun.

In 1987, Kurt Waldheim, a former Wehrmacht officer who had become president of Austria, was received with pomp and circumstance at the Vatican, while the rest of the international community snubbed him.

The 1987 agreement signed by Catholics and Jews providing for the removal of a Carmelite convent next to Auschwitz was not respected by the Polish clergy. The Vatican was slow to resolve the crisis. Matters have been made worse by the veil of secrecy with which the Vatican has shrouded Pope John Paul II's silence during the second world war.

The Pope, who talks of a "new evangelisation", is suspected of wishing to "Christianise" places of great Jewish suffering, and of interpreting the Holocaust as the fulfilment of the mystery of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Amazingly, when visiting Auschwitz in June 1979, he described it as "the Calvary of the contemporary world".

There is now little point in raking up old grievances. No Pope has done as much as John Paul II to reform the Catholic Church's teaching on Judaism. In 1988, he was the first Pope to visit Rome's main synagogue and express his "horror" at "the hatred, persecutions and manifestations of anti-Semitism that have occurred, no matter what the period or who was responsible".

He told the Jews: "You are our favourite brothers and, in a sense, our elder brothers." He went to see Jewish communities in every country he visited, knelt before the Hebrew-inscribed memorial at Birkenau, and became, in December 1993, the first Pope officially to recognise the state of Israel.

And yet there remain lingering doubts about the Vatican's ability to take its self-criticism to its logical conclusion. The entire history of the Jewish people is one of acceptance and rejection. French Jews have not forgotten that only a century after being described by the Convention as "citizens like other people", they became embroiled in the Dreyfus affair, which itself was followed — less than 50 years later

— by the Vichy regime's exclusion of the Jews.

The latest rapprochement between Jews and Catholics is significant. Surprisingly, most of the social and intellectual moves to that end since 1945 have come from the grassroots rather than, as in this case, from the Catholic hierarchy.

No doubt the Pope's desire to pay his debt to the Jews is sincere. But he knows his Church is by no means ready to accept such a step unanimously. Reform has failed to reach everywhere. This is true of Poland, for example, and the Middle East, where Christians dread any gesture by the Vatican that might look like a concession to Israel.

The Vatican's current silence is ascribed by some to the impossibility of "objectifying the unobjectifiable". Might it not then be better to keep quiet rather than expatiate on the sufferings of others? Such a view is bound to be trotted out again in the wake of the Drancy ceremony. But talking about the past will never be in vain, because there will always be revisionists and future generations tempted to forget. (October 2)

Communists in Japan look to the future

Philippe Pons in Tokyo

THE 21st congress of the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) which ended last week, marked the end of an era: 88-year-old Miyamoto, its leader for almost 40 years, bowed out as president of the central committee.

After the deaths of Ho Chi Minh, Mao Zedong and Kim Il-sung, Miyamoto is the last surviving communist to have been a prominent member of the Communist International. His departure will probably accelerate the JCP's shift to more modern policies under the stewardship of its new president, Tetsuo Kato, and secretary-general Kazuo Shii, whom Miyamoto handed over the running of the party in 1994.

The congress took two key decisions: that the JCP would be a party to form part of a coalition government at the beginning of the 21st century, even if it included conservatives; and that relations with the Chinese Communist Party would be normalised.

With 23 deputies and 32 per cent of the vote, the JCP does not carry much weight in parliament but it is the only opposition group whose popularity has steadily increased. Although its membership is stagnating, the JCP plays a leading role in political debate.

The warmth of press comment the departing Miyamoto suggests the party still enjoys a certain amount of sympathy. In Japan, the JCP is respected for its opposition to militarism and its independence in breaking away from Beijing and Moscow in the 1950s.

But communist dissidents regarded Miyamoto's party as a relic that stifled internal debate. Although Miyamoto brought a new blood in 1990 by appointing Shii, then aged 35, as secretary-general, change was impossible as his shadow loomed over the party. Nobody knows if Pons or Shii will alter course.

The JCP is unlikely to opt for Italian-style change of name or give up "democratic centralism". A split is opening between the intellectuals and those interested in social action, which will have to be resolved if the JCP is to fulfil its ambition of having 100 deputies at the beginning of the next century. (September 30)

However, Ostojic's appointment was made democratically. He was eligible to stand for the job because he had been elected to parliament as a deputy for the Serb Democratic party (SDS) in Bosnia's general election in September 1996. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe — which organised the poll and was supposed to weed out any candidates "with a past" — had approved his candidacy.

All deputies in the nationalist parties that make up an overwhelming majority in the Bosnian parliament — the Serb SDS, Bosnian president Alija Izetbegovic's Muslim Party for Democratic Action (SDA) and

the Croat HDZ — voted for Ostojic by a show of hands.

The SDA now admits that it made a mistake. "We didn't know which candidates we were voting for," says Adnan Janjic, president of the SDA group in the Bosnian parliament. He stood down on September 25 at the request of his party, which wanted to quash the indignation in its ranks.

Ostojic will occupy his post at least a year. The commission's remit has been extended to include refugees. In other words, liberties in Bosnia will be further restricted and the return of displaced persons seen increasingly in jeopardy. (September 30)

Serb 'war criminal' heads rights group

Christian Lecomte in Sarajevo

THE decision by the Bosnian parliament to set up a human rights commission is opportune, given the many misdeeds that regularly take place in Bosnia.

However, the Serb appointed to head the commission, Veljko Ostojic, is believed to be a war criminal. Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal has labelled him "the Goebbels of the Bosnian Serbs". Ostojic and Radovan Karadzic, the former leader of the Bosnian Serbs now charged with war crimes, were born in

neighbouring villages in Montenegro and are old friends.

The mention of Ostojic's name strikes terror in those who have met him. "He's the man who played football with the decapitated heads of Muslims in Foca in 1992," says Ziba Adilovic, a Muslim woman from that east Bosnian town. She has been unable to sleep properly ever since she heard of the appointment of the man she describes as "the executioner of Foca".

Foca, whose pre-war population of 40,000 was 52 per cent Muslim and 45 per cent Serb, was one of the first Bosnian

towns to be taken by Serb forces after ruthless "ethnic cleansing".

A member of Karadzic's secessionist government, Ostojic organised the conquest of Foca by arming Serb militiamen and urging them to rid the town of all non-Serbs. "One day, my neighbour's son disappeared," says Adilovic. "She found his body on the bridge over the Drina river. He had been decapitated, but she recognised his checked shirt."

Ostojic is in a position of authority, whereas he ought to be tried, says Nedziba, another former inhabitant of Foca, who lost five members of her family.

Drug money row embroils Mexican Church

Bertrand de la Grange in Mexico City

WHY should the Catholic Church, when it needs money so badly to help the poor, criticise the drug barons for contributing to charities if their donations help to "do good"? That, in essence, was the question asked by Canon Raul Soto in the course of a sermon he gave on September 19 in the church of the Holy Virgin of Guadalupe in Mexico City. It immediately sparked a controversy that the Catholic hierarchy would certainly have preferred to avoid.

As happens every year on the same day, when the 20,000 victims of the Mexico City earthquake 12 years ago are commemorated, hundreds of families had gathered in the church to listen to the clergy's message to all those who lost their lives.

Soto reminded the congregation of the great upsurge of solidarity that followed the tragedy. "Helping one's neighbour is the only way to achieve salvation," he explained.

To illustrate his point, he mentioned the support he had received at the time from Rafael Caro, then the biggest marijuana trafficker, who made generous contributions to the religious organisations in charge of helping earthquake victims.

"Sinners, too, can do good deeds," Soto added. The congregation barely had time to get over their astonishment before

he started lauding the "magnificent charitable work" done for his village by the most notorious Mexican drug baron, Amado Carrillo, who died last July after undergoing extensive plastic surgery.

But Soto was quick to add a rider: "One would like to be able to do the same as these rather unsavoury characters. But that doesn't mean the lives of drug traffickers should serve as an example."

Mexican newspapers, which have always kept a close eye on any declarations by prominent churchmen since the restoration of diplomatic relations between Mexico and the Vatican in 1992, immediately seized on Soto's clinger.

Do the drug traffickers' budgets include an entry for payments to the Church? they wondered. A rather irritated Archbishop of Mexico City, Monsignor Norberto Rivera, certified that the Church regarded the drug trade "as one of the scourges of humanity" and that he had "personally never received a cent from drug traffickers".

The archbishop suggested to the newspapers that they should demand an explanation from Soto, who is widely recognised as carrying influence within the Church — he is both a professor at the Pontifical University, a member of the ecclesiastical tribunal and a prison chaplain of 45 years' standing.

Far from going back on what he had said, Soto confirmed that what he had meant to say was

that "prisoners and sinners were capable of displaying solidarity", which was something that should shock no one.

As for the dilemma over the problem of drug trafficking, the Church prefers to remain poor rather than receive ill-gotten gains, he said. He did, however, add: "It has to be admitted that [traffickers] have infiltrated the state, the army and perhaps even the Church, which nevertheless remains the least corrupt institution."

Such remarks cannot have been greeted to the liking of the Mexican government, already under great pressure from the United States now that the Mexican cartels have become the main purveyors of Colombian cocaine to the US market. (September 26)

Moves on child abuse evidence

Maurice Peyrot and Michèle Aulagnon

"DO YOU know why you're here," asked the woman judge. The little girl, clinging to her mother, nodded. The man attacked me. That was all she could say. The judge asked her mother not to prompt her and went on: "He took your arm?" The girl nodded. "Gently?" She nodded again. And so it went until the girl, visibly exhausted, let her head fall against her mother.

The silence in court was unprecedented — and unbearable for the reporters and members of the public present. The parents of the girl, who was raped in 1995, had specifically asked for the case to be held in public, and not in camera as it could have been. They hoped the publicity surrounding the case would serve as a warning to potential offenders against children. "People must be afraid, or their children too ashamed, to lodge a complaint," they argued.

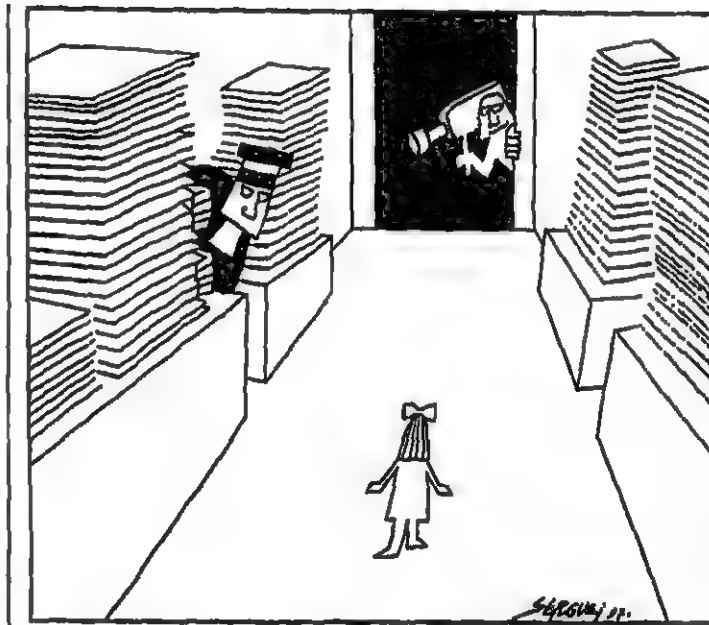
Yet their child gave only token evidence. Very soon the judge said to her: "You've already come here and seen a man in an office. You told him..." And she read out the child's testimony, in which she had told the investigating magistrate that a man in blue overalls, on the stairs of her block of flats, had put "his willy in my mouth".

The act was brief but indisputable, since the girl's cheek had been shown to bear traces of male-specific DNA corresponding to that of the accused and of female-specific DNA contained in her own saliva.

Pascal Bayse, a 43-year-old electrician, did not deny what had happened. He could not remember the whole episode. He had been having professional and emotional problems, and had smoked "a joint" made with zamat, a particularly powerful type of cannabis from Réunion.

He started thinking about his girlfriend and masturbated, at which point the little girl appeared. He claimed that it was as he gently pushed her aside that he smeared her cheek. "I don't think I hurt the girl," he said.

Friends and work colleagues came to Bayse's defence. They thought he must have "flipped". Several said they would unhesitatingly ask him to look after their own children, even after what had happened. Although Bayse had suppressed his memory, he sought no excuses. One thing he was sure of was that he had never desired the girl. "At no point have I felt the slightest sexual



desire for children." He seemed shaken by the girl's testimony: "I hadn't been able to see the girl's face. I think that's what I needed. From the depths of my heart, I ask her parents to forgive me."

Dr Serge Bornstein, a psychiatrist, told the court the girl was suffering from after-effects, such as nightmares and crying fits. He hoped that in time things would sort themselves out. But he was worried about the effect on the girl of the media exposure the trial was getting.

The trial, which required that a little girl had to describe, in front of 100 people, how she was sexually attacked two-and-a-half years earlier, illustrates how much suffering could be avoided by the use of video-taped testimony. It is believed that child victims are questioned an average of 10 times (by parents, police, the investigating magistrate, social workers, lawyers and psychiatrists).

Hubert Van Gijghem, an expert on child sexual abuse, says "For children, repeating a description of what happened means going through the experience again." By being asked to repeat themselves, they may feel they have not been believed, or not said what adults expected.

With each new questioning session, their account changes and becomes less detailed, sometimes to the point of contradicting the facts, or else gets embroiled with elements suggested by the many questions they have been asked. Repeated questioning can also, cause such suffering in the victim that he or she may retract.

Gisjghem's research helped the French national police college to organise an experiment which showed that the amount of information gathered from the video-taped testimony of a child was three times greater than that obtained by traditional methods.

Because they do not have to take notes, police can to question the child more closely. The video also enables them to put on record various gestures — children may protect their face with their arm to evoke a slap, or put their hands round their neck to simulate an attempted strangling — which are rarely described when statements are taken down by hand.

The sexual delinquency bill now being tabled by the justice minister, Elisabeth Guigou, will authorise video and audio recordings of children's evidence. The police are aware of the need for those using such methods to be properly trained. There are also worries about the lack of resources — few police stations and law courts have video cameras at their disposal.

In Paris, a working party made up of magistrates, lawyers and police belonging to the juvenile bureau, will meet shortly to look into the question.

The audio-visual recording of children will raise new issues, says Yvon Talier, head of the public prosecutor's office in charge of minors. "I fear the impact of the image may be overrated. Clearly there'll be child victims who will look the part and others who won't."

(September 18)

Official anti-ETA video angers Basque nationalists

From a correspondent in Madrid

THE Spanish interior ministry has just produced a 15-minute video cassette on the armed Basque separatist organisation, ETA. El Rostro De La Eta (The Face Of ETA) opens with black-and-white pictures of hooded marksmen training in some unidentified part of the Spanish countryside. The video, which has caused uproar in Basque nationalist circles, is about to be sent out to Spanish embassies in 17 countries.

These include, on top of European Union member states, Latin American countries that may be sheltering ETA members, such as Mexico, Venezuela, Chile, Argentina and Uruguay, as well as the United States and Morocco.

José María Aznar's government hopes to make both public opinion and the authorities in those countries more aware of the situation in the Basque country, and "make up for inadequate information" about ETA and its "political wing", Herri Batasuna (HB). The timing is deliberate: on October 6, 23 HB leaders will be tried in Madrid on charges of "defending terrorism" and "collusion with an armed gang". HB has also organised an international campaign to muster opposition to a trial that it describes as "political".

The interior ministry video, which will be passed on by embassies to the governments and leading media in the 17 countries concerned, has been broadcast in its entirety by two Spanish TV channels.

The violence depicted on the video has caused bad feeling between the Basque and the central government. It shows corpses, mutilated bodies, wrecked vehicles and pools of blood resulting from ETA's most murderous attacks, along with other powerful images such as that of the last ETA hostage freed by police after being held and starved for 532 days; shown side by side with a shockingly thin Buchenwald survivor and captioned "1945-1997".

There is grim music on the sound track as the screen is filled with the statistics: "ETA: 761 dead, including 19 children, since 1968." The commentary explains that Spain, a modern democracy for the past 20 years, has carried out major reforms, including the establishment of 17 autonomous regions.

The visuals illustrate this new

Spain — a country that has high-speed TGV trains, is an EU member and hosts Nato summits, but which has also given the Basque Country a very high degree of autonomy.

But, the commentary goes on, ETA, a "Mafia-like terrorist gang", still kills people. The video shows masked men burning the Spanish and French flags at an ILL meeting. Its aim is to sabotage HB's international campaign to muster support.

The HB leaders are accused of having distributed an ETA video cassette at election meetings in 1996 and of having justified certain ETA murders. HB points out that it is a legal party that represents 15 per cent of the electorate in the Basque Country.

It claims to have the support of 700 prominent figures, half of them outside Spain. They are thought to include the Sinn Féin leader, Gerry Adams, and the Plaza de Mayo grandmothers in Buenos Aires. HB has insisted that 20 international observers should attend the trial, which is giving the Spanish political community the jitters.

In answer to Basque nationalists, who have pressed for the video to be withdrawn and accused the government of painting a terrifying picture both of the Basque Country and of Spain, the interior minister, Jaime Mayor, retorted: "The pictures may be hard to take, but reality is even harder to take."

His arguments have failed to convince the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which governs the Basque Country and whose relations with the central government have taken a sharp turn for the worse in recent weeks.

Its leader, Javier Arzalluz, said on September 22: "The PNV and Aznar's People's Party are now no longer bound by the pact they signed in 1996." Madrid's refusal to allow the Basque government to run its own National Institute for Employment was seen as the last straw. A PNV spokesperson has described the anti-ETA video as "a perverse use of violence". (September 26)

Capitalism speaks in only one tongue

English as the language of business has prompted a teaching boom in Eastern Europe, says John Hughes

ASK any university student in the new capitalist economies of Central and Eastern Europe what they are studying and it seems that well over half reply "Economics". Having been an English teacher in Eastern Europe for a number of years, I tend only to meet students who are also learning English, where you meet a student of economics, you will most assuredly meet a student of English. The difference, however, is that where an economics degree is currently in vogue and at the height of fashion, learning and speaking English is simply a matter of career survival.

Pick up a newspaper in Prague or Budapest and most advertisements in the professional jobs section will be in English. In many cases the whole recruitment process — from letter of application to interview to job offer — is in English, especially where the position is with one of the many branches of international firms now operating in this part of the world. So, while economics graduates may never have to dust off their course notes again, they may well be forever brushing up their English to keep their jobs and move up the career ladder.

The boom in English language learning has put a huge strain on state education, and has led to a thriving network of private language schools. Since 1989, teachers of Russian have been cramming English in order to teach the new lingua

franca and preserve their jobs. In Poland, the British Council in conjunction with the Ministry of Education hopes to have trained enough teachers by 2001 to satisfy the estimated 20,000-30,000 needed. Meanwhile state schools remain ill-equipped to cope with demand, so Polish parents accept it as a matter of course that their children attend extra English classes after school. Currently, more than 70 per cent of those enrolling at private language schools are aged under 18. Naturally, many state-trained teachers of English are slipping away from poorly paid state schools into full-time posts in the private sector.

Local teachers often have a high level of English, but teachers from Britain or a country whose native language is English will have no problems finding work. It is still possible for the unqualified back-packer to be approached and offered a job. Such a style of recruitment was commonplace among language schools during the early nineties. The schools set up at the end of the cold war were often formed by state education teachers who hired classrooms from their day-time employers and ran classes in the evening to supplement their meagre salaries.

It quickly became clear to them that native speakers of English were a strong selling point, particularly for teaching higher levels. Finances would not allow the school to recruit teachers from Britain through

the pages of the Guardian or Times Educational Supplement. And so, by employing the passing (untrained) traveller with a few months to spare, private language schools satisfied the (misguided and now changing) customer belief that a native speaker is the best kind of teacher. Salaries then were no higher than the local rate and it was common to find yourself working alongside teachers from voluntary organisations such as Britain's Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) and the American Peace Corps.

Nowadays, teachers in search of a quick fortune do not put ex-communist Europe at the top of their destination list. However, by working in one of the large cities such as Warsaw a teacher may be able to earn a wage that is only 15 per cent less than would be paid in Italy, according to one British EFL recruitment agency. Teachers also often discover that they are working for schools that are professionally-run, customer-orientated businesses that provide all the services one would expect from the developed EFL markets of Madrid or Milan. Indeed, many who have worked in Mediterranean countries and move to Eastern Europe will vouch that the quality of schools is often noticeably higher.

The commitment among many schools to quality may stem in part from the Central-Eastern European pride in having some of the highest literacy rates in the world. The Hungarian Chamber of Language Schools and the Polish Association for Standards in English are two organisations dedicated to achieving and maintaining standards within language schools. They run schemes aiming to guarantee a level of pedagogic quality, favourable terms and conditions for teachers and the provision of effective managerial structures. By proving this status through visits from outside auditors, schools gain the right to bear the scheme's logo on their publicity material.

This has obvious benefits to both prospective students and teachers. In striving for academic excellence, a recognised school may offer its employees the chance to take teacher training courses and internationally recognised TEFL qualifications. It is as possible now to get a CTEFLA or a DTEFLA in Krakow as it is in London.

ing chains such as Berlitz and its guaranties has forced local language schools to give up their joyfully curious management methods in streamlined systems of administration. The legendary Kalkreuth bureaucracy does exist, but in most schools this is as a product of laws and officialdom that is slow to change. The schools themselves, having realised that they must compete to survive, have turned once teachers into marketing managers, sales reps and accountants.

Recognising this need for management know-how brought schools from all over Eastern Europe together in 1996 to hold the first ELT management conference. Originally it was conceived as a meeting ground for English language schools to discuss the issues facing people with no experience of Western business methods. This year's conference in Budapest attracted interest not only from the East but Far East as well, and future conferences will be open to managers and owners from countries all over the world. It seems, therefore, that the world of ELT, a part of the globe that is usually looking elsewhere for ideas may at last be having its ideas looked at by the world.

John Hughes was director of studies for Business English in a Polish language school.

If you are an EFL teacher and have useful advice you wish to share with others, feel free to submit an article of no more than 1,000 words to the Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, EC1M 3HQ, UK. (E-mail address: www.guardian.co.uk; Fax: +44 (0) 171 242 0965). We hope to publish the best article in the next TEFL supplement in January.

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Wild spirit of Tuscany

Paul Evans

CLANG, dong, clang... the bells of ridgetop churches ring out with a truly Tuscan attitude: relaxed and timeless, a redolence rich and warm with chianti grapes ripening at harvest-time. A lone buzzard mews its own chiming high above, riding the thermals of a sunny afternoon. The buzzard scans the world below — the mosaic of olive groves, vineyards, rolling ploughed fields, exclamatory cypresses and deep woods. We read the same landscape using different languages.

Through the olive grove forage a small posse of rock partridge. These plump, greyish birds with red legs and a clear black band which crosses their eyes like a burglar's mask and meets under their white throats are found in rocky evergreen forests and scrub in the hill country of Italy and Greece. They're also found, I suspect, plucked and plasticised in the local supermarket. The rock partridge colours fit perfectly with the olives and cypresses and they have that fashionable, slightly superior, Florentine walk that seems to have stepped straight out of a Renaissance fresco.

Everything in Tuscany seems to be ripening; you can taste it in the air. A fig tree mutters in the dry rattly breeze, its milky sap suckling the green bullets of fruit to rich wine-purple. But these just plump to earth like droppings, unpecked. Those who do give a fig are the early-morning jays and the wasps and butterflies which blunder drunkenly away from the mess of fallen fruit.

Famous for the fecundity of its culinary delights, everything in this part of Italy seems to be on someone's menu. The woods which clothe the ridges and precipitous ravines are also home to wild boar. Boar hunting is beginning and vantage points in the undergrowth have been cleared by hunters. Beneath a canopy of oak, ash, elm and pine live laurel and spiny, evergreen butcher's



ILLUSTRATION: BARRY LIVING

broom. In dappled sunlight, cyclamen with pink to white upswart petals bloom.

Out in the open, the heat of the afternoon buzzes dreamily with crickets and cicadas which are echoed by the engines of motor scooters and little three-wheeler vans laden with buckets of tomatoes and boxes of grapes, labouring up the hill. Suddenly materialising, lizards, with heads high, backs long and tails tramined into the electricity of the earth, flash with meteor speed. A shiny black scorpion wanders slowly across a doorstep, visiting the dark corners of a sunstruck afternoon, trafficking some ancient myth.

Darkness falls quickly. A fox emerges from a bramble patch, yawns, then sets off for the nocturnal life that everyone else in Italy seems to be preparing for. Later, the sky shakes with white flashes and explosions as thousands of fireworks flower under the stars. This is the exuberance of a Tuscan harvest festival. In the spirit of this ancient landscape, the fertility of nature and the labours of its people are celebrated with fire and noise. Out of the wooded shadows, behind the slow, peaceful façade of daytime, Tuscany's wine and food come from this wild spirit, like a great wild boar charging through the night.

Chess Leonard Barden

BACK in 1982, Anatoly Karpov gave a 25-board simul against the England junior squad. The opposition was hot: future GMs Hodgson and King were on the top boards, and Conquest, Gallagher and Howell were lower down.

Even the bottom board, Edward Lee, was selected to deliver a surprise punch at the end of the world champion's tour of the hall: he had won his six previous simul against GMs, and Karpov became his seventh victim.

Karpov realised he had to work, fought his way out of some poor positions and emerged after six hours with +12 - 8 - 5, which he admitted was the worst result of his life.

In 1986, Karpov played the same squad. It was summer exam time, the team was weaker, so Karpov's +9 - 8 - 3 was less convincing than Karpov's results. He even lost his temper with one opponent, claiming wrongly that the junior's draw offer was a breach of Fide rules. Spectators of both events rightly concluded that the next world championship series would be closely fought.

A few weeks ago, K and K had a similar head-to-head simul, but the outcome was very different. Karpov, playing eight Chinese boys and eight girls in Beijing, could score only +5 - 9 - 2, and then lost +1 - 3 - 2 in a clock match against the boys.

Karpov met far stronger opposition: the Argentine Olympiad team, most of them 2,500-rated grandmasters, in Buenos Aires. His result (+6 - 5 - 1) and games were impressive, and if the simul are a guide, Karpov hasn't a hope if they play another match.

Karpov v Spangenberg

1 d4 d5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 c4 dxc4 4 e3 c6 5 Bxc4 c5 6 0-0 a6 7 Bb3

Nc6? b5 is a more critical test of the white formation.

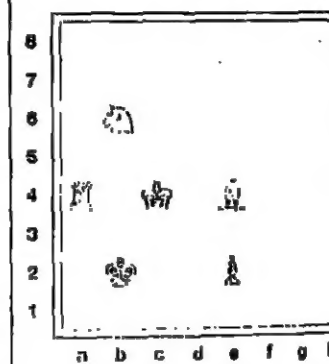
8 Nc3 Be7 9 Qe2 0-0 10 Rd1 cxd4 11 Nxd4 Nxd4 12 exd4 Nd5 Black's position is already difficult. In many lines, White can break up the centre by d4-d5, while Karpov's delayed development of his c1 bishop means that this piece can track the BQ whether it moves to a5, b6 or c7.

13 Qf3! Breaking up Black's attempted blockade. Nxc3 14 bxc3 Qc7 15 c4 The opening has been a disaster for Black, whose pieces lack reasonable squares.

Bd6 16 c5 Be7 17 B4 Qd7 18 Rac1 Qc6 19 d5 exd5 20 Bxd5 Qg6 21 h3 Stops Bg4. White has a dream position, where every piece is in action while Black's Q-side remains undeveloped.

Ra7 22 Qe3 Bf6 23 c6 bxc6 24 Be4! 24 Qxa7 wins the exchange, but Karpov wants a whole rook. Bf5 25 Bxf5 Qxf5 26 g4! Resigns.

No 2493



White mates in three moves, against any defence by Pal Benko, 1993. Another miniature by American's problem-composing GM: you have to mate before Black's promoting pawn can do any damage.

No 2492: 1 Qd3 Rxd3+ 2 exd3 mate. On other black defences White mates by 2 Na6, 2 Nb3, 2 Bc7 or 2 Qb5. The finalists fell for 1 c4? d3!

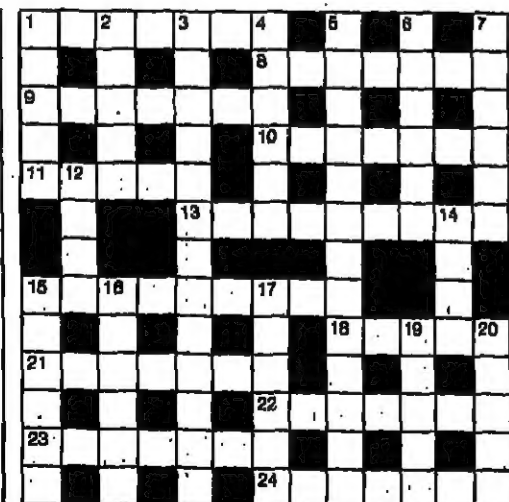
Quick crossword no. 387

Across

- 1 The man on the omnibus (7)
- 8 Set in order (7)
- 9 Royal tomb (7)
- 10 (In) close partnership (with) (7)
- 11 Book of maps (5)
- 13 Void (feeling) (9)
- 15 Odd person (5,4)
- 18 Surpass (5)
- 21 Like the M25 (7)
- 22 Stuck on the bottom (7)
- 23 Loosen (with driver) (7)
- 24 Mini-clinic or treatment room (4,3)

Down

- 1 Dried coconut kernel (5)
- 2 Month (5)
- 3 Sanjar minster (4,9)
- 4 Crazy fellow (6)
- 5 Principal see (13)
- 6 Extra performance (6)



Last week's solution

TOOK ONE LEAVE
EXTRAORDINARY
BARD UNBROKEN
EDWARD VEGETABLE
HOWITZER POND
O A B M D A
VEGAN IMPROBABLE
E G C L U G Y
N O N J N O V I R A Y

Bridge Zia Mahmood

"IS THERE always a clue?" I asked. Sherlock Holmes put down his newspaper with a sigh. "I assume, Watson," he said, "that you are not referring to any of our little adventures that you chronicled with so lamentable a disregard for logical precision. Instead, you have been reading the bridge column in this week's Guardian Weekly, and are wondering..."

"Amazing, Holmes!" I interjected. "How could you possibly tell that I wanted to talk about the bridge column?"

"Your copy of the Guardian Weekly is open at the Leisure page," observed Holmes sarcastically, "and since you are incapable of holding more than one thought in your head for any length of time, it is surely obvious that the subject of your discourse would be that which had most recently occupied your mind."

"What is your opinion of this Mahmood, the author?" I inquired.

"The second least dangerous player in London," replied Holmes dismissively. "But in answer to your earlier question, it is indeed the case that very few situations at the bridge table furnish no clues at all to the inquiring mind."

"Take the following deal, which appeared in a recent international trial, and see if you can do better than the many declarers who failed in their contract:

♠ A5
♥ Q62
♦ K83
♣ AJ962

♠ Q
♥ J
♦ AQJ97652
♣ K104

"South is declarer in six diamonds, and since one can often obtain clues from the bidding — or lack of it — this was the auction at one table:

South	West	North	East
Pass	Pass	INT	Pass
3♦	Pass	4♦	Pass
4NT	Pass	5♥	Double
6♣	Pass	Pass	Pass

"4NT was simple Blackwood, and in response to East's double of the conventional response, West led the ten of hearts. East won with the ace and returned a trump. West following. Your problem is the same

as declarer's — who has the queen of clubs?"

"I can't see anything in the bidding to guide me," I said. "West did not open, and East did not overcall, but I don't really see how that helps. I would play out a few more rounds of trumps, in the hope that the diamonds..."

"My dear Watson," said Holmes, "I said that this was an international trial. The defenders, seeing that club suit on the table, are hardly likely to throw away other than unhelpful major suit cards. Of course, there may be a genuine squeeze of one kind or another, but there really is no need for such refinements. You have all the information at your disposal, if only you would use your powers of reason."

When I continued to look baffled, Holmes explained, "Consider East's decision to switch to a trump at the second trick. Whereas East may well suspect that a second round of hearts will not stand up, he would be more or less forced to play a heart at trick two as the only hope for the defence — unless he knew that dummy's club suit was not strong. And how could he know that without the guarded queen in his own hand?"

Letter from Central Slovakia Edward Cullen

Doing the salamander

IT IS Friday afternoon and the start of a holiday weekend. Suddenly I understand what the bugle calls that have issued all week from the Tannoy in town must mean. Of course! The salamander is coming!

There is a legend here about a salamander. Years ago, a shepherd, sitting out with his flock through the heat of a scorching summer day, became aware of a salamander sitting in the shade beside him. Time passed, the sheep nibbled lazily at the grass and the sun moved higher. All at once, or so it seemed to the shepherd, the shadows slipped away and the salamander lay in the full gaze of the sun, and it glistened and sparkled like gold. Stunned, the shepherd crept closer and realised that the salamander was covered with gold dust. He reached out to touch the creature but it slipped away between the rocks. When the shepherd came down from the hills and told his story, the people realised for the first time that there were riches buried in their hills.

This, the story goes, was how the face of the countryside, and the fate of the people who lived in this mountainous region of Slovakia, were transformed. Gold and silver mining developed rapidly and brought prosperity for the next thousand years. Now the mines are closed, but every year the people remember and celebrate the salamander.

The celebration lasts for two days and draws people from the surrounding villages and even further afield. The main square is filled with a street market and spills over as people move from stall to stall, eating the food and drinking the alcohol for sale. Some stalls sell beer but most sell home-produced (and often cloudy) white wine. At one side of the cobbled square a stage is set up for folk singing and dancing, choirs and bands.

By early evening, the air is heavy with the scent of wine and there is plenty of evidence of serious drinking. More and more people arrive, streaming up the hill from the lower part of town to watch the salamander procession. This is timed to reach the square just as night falls

and is the major event of the festival. For a kilometre in each direction, the main street leading up to the square is thick with spectators.

As the leading groups in the procession come into view, you begin to see how it works. The participants move forward and stop, move forward and then stop again. They travel in long curves, from side to side up the road, narrowing until they are walking in file, then opening out once again, all in imitation of the movements of the salamander.

This pattern only becomes apparent after watching for quite a while. The procession is so long and each constituent part so different. More than 30 different groups, each representing a village, mining community or lodge take part, and most groups have their own brass band or troupe of musicians. As each section of the salamander comes to a pause in the movement, they dance or sing or play. A whole village (or so it seems) of male voices sings echoing, resonant songs. They sing and sing until the tune is taken up by the crowd and hundreds of voices are raised in unison. It is stirring stuff. And then the procession moves on and scores of miners' lanterns swing and splutter into the grainy dusk.

Dancing girls, decorated horses and carts, brass bands, folk singers and dancers all pass by as the salamander winds his way up the hill. Each time a group stops to perform, another moves on. Interspersed along the line, veteran miners and their families dressed in traditional costume march regally, holding up the banners of their villages. A cone-shaped copper cannon mounted on a gun-carriage is hauled all the way. At intervals it is pointed at the crowd, and young lads throw firecrackers into the barrel. These explode with piercing echoes.

There is cheering and applause, singing and laughter. And everywhere, everyone is drinking, spectators and participants alike — the last few groups in the procession glassy-eyed. Yet I never once see money changing hands. This is a moment for tradition and drunken glory alone.

A Country Diary

Cotnam Gogan

KIAMBU, KENYA: The old settler's home crowns the rising ranks of blossoming coffee. It is large and single storey and from a distance seems lost in a jungle of Jacaranda trees in bloom. Their lilac blossoms carpet the bedraggled remains of a beautiful garden, struggling with weeds and indifference.

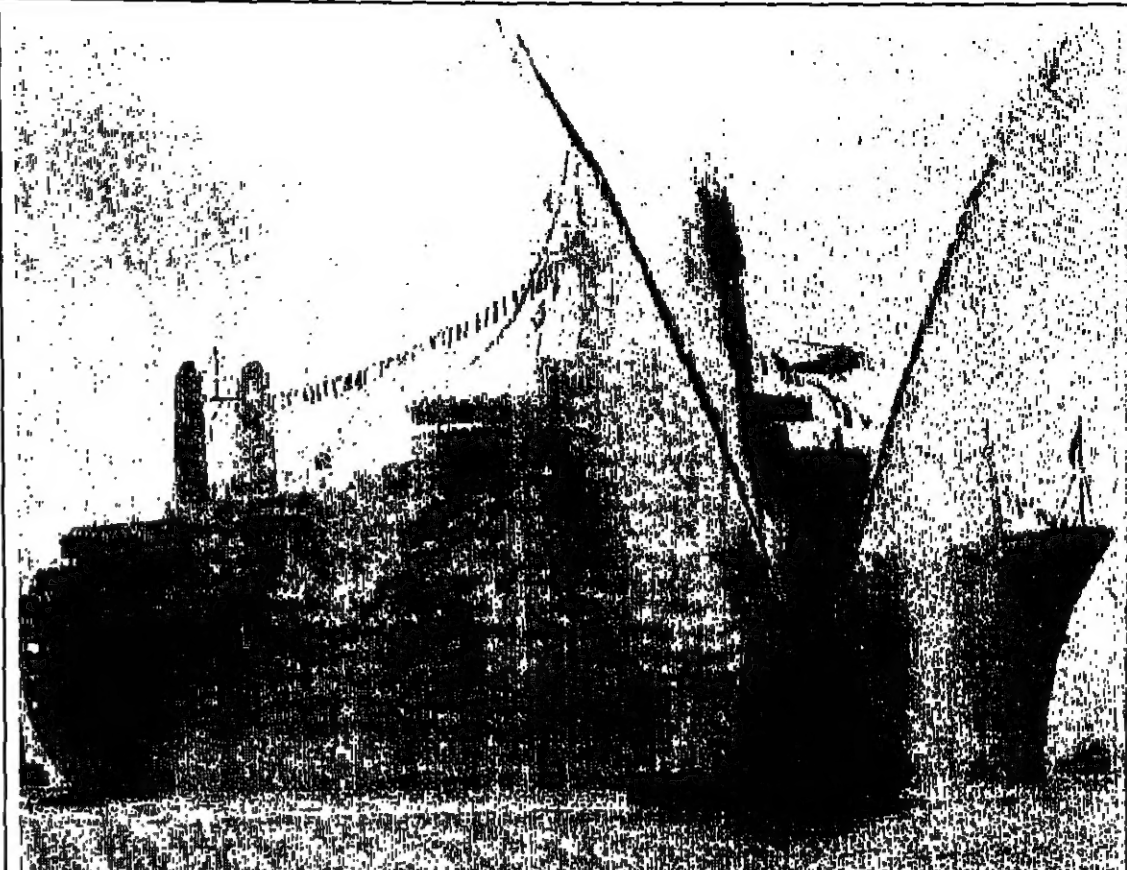
Jacaranda are see-through and do not get in the way of the view from the house, over miles and miles of coffee, rising gently to the Maa Hills in the far distance. Kilima Mbogo, the hill of the Buffalo, stands up with its distinctive high, humped shape. The Aberdares command like a great castle to the northwest, and if you are lucky you may glimpse the beautiful but elusive Mount Kenya. Its equatorial snow never disappears.

Nearer to hand, at the entrance to the driveway, is a great bell-shaped indigenous tree, called the *mutinga*. In bloom it becomes a mass of white, bubble-like blossoms.

It was under this tree that each evening, in days gone by, the displaced Kikuyu owner came to mourn his home, buried under swathes of coffee trees. Remarkably, his offspring express no regrets. More than the sweeping valley of greenery or the tangle of blossoms, they value the hard, brown beans.

No one here speaks ill of the departed settler. Anyone can buy shares in the coffee he bequeathed, or draw water from his water-channel, or pray in the chapel he built.

As usual, both berry and blossom vie for attention. Women, exploited now as then, are already lining up to pick the red-dropping berry, while the white, scented blossom gives promise of another generous harvest.



Final voyage... After 36 years of service the cruise liner Canberra was saluted by five warships as she steamed towards her home port of Southampton for the final time last week. Hundreds of passengers returning from a Mediterranean cruise thronged the deck. During the Falklands war the liner ferried 6,500 troops to the South Atlantic and held 3,200 Argentine prisoners of war. PHOTOGRAPH: GAVIN J. LLOYD

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

IF dinosaurs had developed complex civilisations, could any evidence of this possibly have survived 65 million years?

IT WOULD depend on whether the dinosaurs could have achieved our level of technology. The natural processes of the Earth's crust would have destroyed much evidence. Fossils survive millions of years, so perhaps artefacts made out of composite materials such as carbon fibre could survive, although buildings would have been buried.

The only sure way of leaving a trace of civilisation is to go into space. The artefacts left on the moon by the Apollo astronauts will still be there in millions of years time — if they have not been removed by future tourists. The Pioneer spacecraft, bearing messages to beings it may encounter, will still be voyaging through the stars for billions of years. — Peter Stockill, Berwick Hills, Middlesbrough

HOW long will water keep in the fridge before it is unfit to drink?

IN 1984 I was on holiday in Norway. I put the water left over from my water bottle in a small jar at the back of the fridge. It was still there 13 years later, absolutely crystal clear and delightful to drink. And in Australia in 1990 I filled my bottle with rainwater. This is also crystal clear seven years later and it has not even been in the fridge. — Roger Partridge, Surbiton, Surrey

A PART from Mother Teresa, who were the other four honorary citizens of the United States?

WINSTON CHURCHILL, the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, and William and Hannah Penn, founders of Pennsylvania. — Duke Morgan, London

AM I more closely related to my mother or my brother?

THAT'S a good question for your father. — Sergei Dascalu, Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine

IN TERMS of your genetic make-up, you inherit half your genes from your mother and half from your father. The information is carried on 46 sets of chromosomes — 23 pairs — which have been split and randomly recombined to make 23 new pairs in you. This means that you are "50 per cent" related to your mother.

Theoretically, you may share even more of your genes with your brother, due to your shared paternal input — in identical twins it is 100 per cent. However, probability suggests that shared genetic information in typical siblings can be relatively low. This is because it is possible, for example, that you inherit the opposite half of the chromosomal pairs from your mother to those inherited by your brother. On average, about one in four siblings could claim to be "more closely related" to each other than to their mothers. — Mark Batchelor, Crawley, Sussex

IF you embed a piece of copper in the trunk of a tree, does it kill the tree?

THIS may be true, especially if the piece of copper is the shape and size of a big axe. — William Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

NO. Minute amounts of copper might dissolve and pass into the sap flowing up through the trunk, but plants are quite tolerant of low concentrations — in fact copper is actually needed by plants, as a component of some proteins essential for photosynthesis. And high concentrations of copper salts have long been used as fungicides to spray on plants. At best the copper

object may help to inhibit fungal attack near the wound, which would usually heal with time. Of course the copper could be a problem later if the tree is sawn for timber. — Ken Joy, Warwickshire

DURING my years as a tree surgeon I came across the copper-nail myth many times. Once, when cutting up the trunk of a typically vigorous poplar, I came across a ring of copper nails. Several inches inside the wood, the tree had enclosed them and carried on growing with no ill effects. — Geoff March, Stroud, Gloucestershire

WHAT are the chances of the year 2000 computer-date problem causing world-wide economic meltdown?

01010101. — Bert Hieleme, Tweed, Ontario, Canada

Any answers?

HAVE heard that one of the 12 tribes of Israel eventually settled in eastern Nigeria and became the present-day Ibo people. Is this true? — Sebastian Uchendu, Vlezna, Italy

WHICH is more intelligent, my seven-month-old baby or my seven-year-old cat? — Mike McLinden, Harborne, Birmingham

HAVE just seen a spider build a web across my 4-metre garden without intervening support. How does it get the first thread started? — H Tenyson, London

Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171-44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ. The Notes & Queries website is at http://mq.guardian.co.uk/

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ART/PHOTOGRAPHY
Adrian Searle

JAMES ENSOR, of Ostend, was the oddest of artists. Born in 1860, the son of an English father and a Belgian mother, Ensor progressed from the reviled to the revered. Ensor the fool, Ensor the "Mule-ish Englishman", became Baron of Belgium, Knight of the Order of Leopold and annotated with the sobriquet Prince of Painters.

In his youth he espoused anarchist, socialist, anti-monarchist ideas. As a grand old man he dined with Albert Einstein, received reverential visits from Emile Nolde and Wassily Kandinsky, and was honoured by Belgian royalty. His drawings were bought by the Albertina in Vienna at the height of the second world war. A major retrospective of his work was held at the National Gallery in London in 1946, three years before he died.

The Barbican Art Gallery in London has mounted the first large-scale exhibition of Ensor's work in Britain since that National Gallery show.

Nowadays, Ensor is remembered in this country for his Entry Of Christ Into Brussels in 1889, a vast, burlesque carnival painting now in the Getty Museum. Christ, of course, is Ensor himself, envisioning himself being swept along by the crowd on his triumphal entry into the Belgian capital. Down in the bottom right-hand corner of the multitudinous, carnival scene, the Marquis de Sade looks benignly on.

Ensor's academic training was conventional enough, and the work from the early 1880s, which begins the Barbican exhibition — thickly-painted Brussels in butery sunshine, claustrophobic bourgeois interiors — are all a bit off-putting. But he was, at the same time, painting luminous seascapes in the manner of Turner, making beautiful drawings and beginning to tip over into the mystical and into a world of demons and madness.



Horror scope: Ensor's Bad Doctors (left) seems irrelevant next to McCullin's victims of war (above)

At his best, Ensor is an alarming and frightening caricaturist, a weird mix of the 18th century satirist, the Sadean and the Blakean visionary. Sometimes, he is like Hieronymus Bosch redone as saucy seaside-postcard burlesque. As much as he looked inward for his inspiration, he looked to England: to the 19th century masters of English landscape, and to the savage, earthy wit of Gillray, Rowlandson and Hogarth. He painted and drew fierce satirical, snivelling advocates and evil judges, top-hatted, syringe-toting doctors, garlanded with their expiring patients' entrails. He lampooned the Catholic Church, the judiciary, the military, the politicians, the bourgeoisie, the state.

In one of his most bitter etchings, Doctrinal Punishment, from 1889, a soldier, a nun, a bishop, a magistrate and King Leopold XI sit in a line, defecating into the open mouths of the populace below. Ensor later tried to suppress this coprophagic nightmare, buying up all the copies of the print he could find. With his amputated limbs,

bloody knives, and idiot violences, Ensor looks forward to Philip Guston (and to the best of L.S. Lowry) as much as he looked back at Gillray. But much of Ensor's best-loved work — his Pierrots, carnival masked clowns and demons — I find irritating and dull. Perhaps it isn't his fault: his inventions have become stock characters from the "strip away the skin of reality to reveal the festering sores beneath" school of heavy symbolic expressionism.

HOWEVER, Ensor's grim, cartoonish works — the Assassination, from 1890, the Good Judges — from the following year, and the Bad Doctors from the year after that, are the real stuff of nightmare. The rest strives too much, and his world comes to feel less and less real, too strained and artificial, and a little bit smug. Compared to Goya's Black Paintings, for example, Ensor's sweating, flabby, all-singing, all-dancing grotesquerie seems trite.

The Barbican has juxtaposed

Ensor with a retrospective of the photographer Don McCullin. Whether or not these photographs are "art" (who cares? — his best work begs no equivocation) is of less import than the things he has seen and photographed. The exhibition traces McCullin's career as a photojournalist from his first published shot — of young hoodlums in Finsbury Park in 1959 — through war zones and famines, from sectarian violence in Cyprus and Derry, to penis-gourd waving tribesmen in Indonesia and lowering clouds over West Country fields.

Halfway through my second round of McCullin's show, I put my notebook away. What is the point, I thought, in redescribing what his eye has seen, his camera recorded. It is difficult to do more than enumerate. A mentally ill derelict yelling in Spitfields. Happy transvestites in Southend. A Congolese civilian dead by a roadside, his face split open revealing his crushed skull. Starving Biafrans. A Sudanese boy, press-ganged into the army. Blank-eyed GIs. The dead and the

butchered, the shell-shocked, the emaciated, the bloated dead, the traught mothers, victims, aggressors, more victims. Every one a victim, one way or another. Oh, McCullin has seen too much. But we've seen it, too. The difference is he was there.

Some of the horror was chest-thumping, perhaps more prosaic, but overtly violent, more low-key. Squalor and poverty is less esthetic than war; hunger is less shocking than absolute famine. No palm and machete attacks way than rubber bullets, car bombs and bricks. But the atmosphere of McCullin's photographs is the same. The same darkness, the starkness, the same brooding, seething to things.

The cumulative effect of McCullin's exhibition is one of haunting distress. It is partly a inarticulate distress at one's numbness in the face of the monstrous. We end up mouthing platitudes about man's inhumanity to man, but the problem is none of us is monstrous at all, or inhuman, or too human. We endure these images, and go on looking.

The upper gallery at the Barbican is a solemn place to be with these photographs. Looking over the parapet, down at the Ensors in the gallery below, I was struck by the comparative banality. Their effect felt like an affront.

Ensor — the stuff of nightmares? Did I write that? After McCullin's photographs they seem to be part of an irrelevant, tural game. But in the end, things are all we have to keep from the edge.

There is respite. McCullin's photographs of elephants bathing the river in India, a religious festival on a beach in Bali, his landscape and still lifes, come at the end of show as some kind of palliative. Landscapes turn grimmish into atmospheric chiaroscuro. His still lifes — flowers and fruit and bits of sculpture — are rendered in a powerful light. But as much as content takes them in, they are the product of an eye brooding massacres, corpses, mutilations, needless death.



Lichtenstein's celebrated diptych, Whaam!

out, and I still think of them as his most brilliant work. Seeing them in the flesh was, of course, the essential thing. Pictures that are themselves more or less reproductions do not reproduce well. Here were frames and cropped images from comic strips translated into large paintings, coarse printing of skillfully but quickly drawn and coloured narrative scenes subtly redesigned and redrawn to become modern history paintings. War and peace, romantic bliss and romantic pain — scenes at once ordinary and irresistible: firm and clear, as though they were stills from a film directed by Hiroshige, the great Japanese printmaker. Lichtenstein's technique was perfect for his purposes. He had found a way of imitating the dots of newspaper by painting through per-

forated steel, but he knew where to use unbroken areas of colour and what weight and scale to give to the thoughts and ideas. The Tate Gallery made a brilliant choice in acquiring this diptych. Whaam! is a Pop work in its own right, but it is also a masterpiece of seeing with what being seen.

There was always something about Lichtenstein to be evaluated. But the excitement, joy, dropped as he moved into the 60s and 60s, even though there was never any loss of skill, and technical as well as visual brightness.

Norbert Lynton
Roy Lichtenstein, artist, born 1923, died September 29, 1997

GUARDIAN WEEKLY
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Fish and VIPs

TELEVISION
Nancy Banks-Smith

JENNIFER PATERSON and Clarissa Dickson Wright make the prospect of being overweight and over the hill positively enticing. You can, for instance, throw your weight about, and (judging by the sound of song and laughter) some sort of perpetual party seems to be going on on the other side of the hill.

It is the sign of a dedicated party-goer when the doorman at the Dorchester ("A very good watering hole") greets you like an old friend. By the simple act of breathing Paterson seems to exhibit the *joie de vivre* which comes to most of us only after several large pink gin.

I first encountered her on Food And Drink when she roared up on a motorbike, festooned in random scarves like Isadora Duncan (or, perhaps, not very like). It was

pumpkin harvest time. Pumpkins were piled up into a pumpkin mountain brighter than a thousand suns. Their colours were autumnal, their waistlines laughable, they all seemed to have taken a deep breath and gone red in the face. She dominated this exuberance effortlessly, like a dangerously unpredictable fairy godmother. You felt she might at any minute turn the whole boiling lot into a convoy of London buses.

The fickle finger of fame has tapped Jennifer and Clarissa on the shoulder when they least expected it. Television celebrity doesn't suit everyone. Dandy Nichols, a bit of a violet at heart, was quite wounded when people used to shout "Silly moo!" after her in the street. You would be looking at Jennifer Paterson for some time before you were reminded of any bit of a violet.

They are now on their second series of Two Fat Ladies (BBC2). I would say that Clarissa was the straight man but, as she is so clearly

neither, "feed" might be more appropriate. Jennifer was describing how to soak salt cod. "It is very handy if you happen to have a running stream coming through the kitchen like they do in the monasteries in Portugal." "What," asked Clarissa, "if you don't have a running stream?" "You leave a tap dripping, which the Water Board won't like, but to hell with them." It was quite a while before you wondered what Jennifer was doing in a Portuguese monastery.

The filmsy excuse for their double act was the Brazilian ambassador's cocktail party. "The ambassador's parties, of course, are known for their exquisite taste. This time, as Jennifer and Clarissa were doing the cooking, he tried out balls."

On arrival, Jennifer tried out her creaking Portuguese. "I think I said we were the two fat ladies for the ambassador." The ambassador's wife escorted them, with undue haste I thought, to the bowls of the embassy.

They discussed how to pin down

a man at a cocktail party. Jennifer said: "I've noticed these lovely girls pitch their voice very low like this. The man has to get nearer and nearer. It always works. I say 'HELLO, DEARS!' and I don't get off with anybody." After a while pans stopped rattling and no more crockery fell off the shelves.

Clarissa said: "I go off and look interestingly at some picture or piece of furniture. Invariably somebody will come up and talk to you. And you say [she adopted the look of a dying duck in a thunderstorm]: 'I don't think Louis Quinze dates, really. It's beyond fashion.' Then they get very bored and go away." She threw a spent match over her shoulder in a manner which reminded you strongly of Henry VIII.

At the ambassador's cocktail party, slim women with sparkling cars nibbled fishy bits. Jennifer and Clarissa were on the balcony like low-luck-out. Unlabeled, Jennifer sang a spirited rendition of Brazil. They are, as Jennifer said about devils on horseback, "a substantial and rich but very tasty titbit".

Passion amid scholarship

THEATRE
Michael Billington

WHY A E Housman? Why should Tom Stoppard have chosen him as the subject of his new play, *The Invention Of Love*, running at London's Cottesloe Theatre? Because it gives Stoppard the chance to meditate on scholarship and poetry, goodness and beauty, homo and hetero, Ruskin and Pater, Housman and Wilde, and a whole host of other subjects beside. Whatever the play may lack, it is certainly not raw material.

In fact, the play is one of Stoppard's juiciest. Like Travesties it deals with the nature of memory, as the dead Housman looks back on his younger self, and with the coincidences of history. Like Arcadia, it is also preoccupied with the quality of passion, the random nature of literary survival and the idea of life as a route march leading inexorably to the grave. It is weighed down with too much scholarship, but it attempts to combine the pyrotechnic dazzle of early Stoppard with the later mellowness.

For my taste, it is crammed with too much detail. He not only recaptures the young Housman's passion for his Oxford contemporary, Moses Jackson, but also the quips and quiddities of dons of the time. But the play really takes wing when the dead AEH confronts the young Housman.

Stoppard always writes best when he writes from the heart; and here he gives the older man a deeply moving defence of classical scholarship. But also, Stoppard dwells on the lottery of literary survival and on the power of passion.

For the other big theme that runs through the play is that feeling is defined by intensity rather than vociferousness. Housman's passion for Jackson was internalised, unconsummated and the oblique source of much of the poetry. But Stoppard's point is that it was just as real as Wilde's more flamboyant infatuation with Bosie. In that sense, the play is an unfashionable anti-Freudian work that hymns the validity of sexual repression and of a closeted love.

What is intriguing is that it offers Stoppard at his best and worst. The Latin learning is laid on with a trowel. At the same time, the jokes are very good and Stoppard writes with palpable love about a poet fired by the idea of textual integrity who knew the value of Platonic love. Richard Byrne, in his last production as the National's director, serves the text with his usual exemplary loyalty. I also liked Anthony Ward's back-projections. And at the heart of the play lies the formidable pairing of John Wood and Paul Rhys as the dead and the living Housman, John Carlsle, Benjamin Whitrow and Michael Bryant lend weight to a supporting cast in an evening that reminds us that Stoppard, for all his cerebral qualities, is at his best when he endorses private passion.

Pop with snap and crackle

OBITUARY
Roy Lichtenstein

IT IS difficult to think of Roy Lichtenstein, who has died of pneumonia at the age of 73, as other than a man of the 1960s, one of the brightest stars of the American Pop Art movement which shot to fame and notoriety in New York in 1961-62.

By the end of the sixties exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic were already memorialising Pop Art as though to write fins under it all, with gratitude, but also a lot of art-historical nit-picking. Though almost all of the stars on what was by then a truly international firmament have gone on twinkling, the movement as such had reached something akin to middle age, which in this context means senility. In any case, there was a new movement to come to grips with, Conceptual Art: much less fun and rarely as brilliant visually.

Initially, there was none of the sudden, widespread enthusiasm for Pop Art in New York that we had in London. One of the big issues was whether doing paintings from advertising and from comic strips could possibly deserve the name of art.

Lichtenstein and Andy Warhol did not know each other when they both began to work with these sources. Lichtenstein had been exploring the use of Disney creatures in semi-abstract paintings and then also those much coarser images, small black-line newspaper advertisements for common goods such as sofas and golf balls.

In any case, this had all been part of a gradual development. Lichtenstein was born into a solid middle-class New York family. Painting was something of a hobby for teenage Roy, but so was jazz, and he combined them in portraits of musicians. A summer school at the Art Students' League found him painting Bowers and Coney Island scenes under the tutelage of Reginald Marsh, himself a major New York social realist.

From this he went on to the School of Fine Arts at Ohio State University where he found himself fascinated by lectures on the psychology of vision and representation.

Stylistically, he moved between semi-abstract work in various Cubist manners and his personal version of Abstract Expressionism. He worked for some years as an engineering draftsman and then also

briefly as a graphic artist while having almost annual one-man shows in New York, marrying and becoming a father. In 1960 he was appointed professor of Rutgers University, where he met Alan Kaprow, the recent initiator of Happenings reflecting on consumer culture, and got involved with Kaprow's circle of collaborators, including Claes Oldenburg and Jim Dine.

In 1961, he painted his first Pop paintings. His own 1962 show at Leo Castelli's Gallery in New York made his name, and he was included in the first museum exhibition to focus on The New Paintings of Common Objects at the Pasadena Art Museum the same year.

I met him shortly after the Venice Biennale of 1966 and recall vividly a man who struck me as surprisingly un-ivided. He was shy, hesitantly friendly, thoughtful but not full of ready ideas and convictions. Other American artists I had met had been more up-front, physically some- times in their assertions. This experience was reinforced in 1968 when a comprehensive Lichtenstein exhibition was shown at the Tate Gallery in London. I have rarely enjoyed and admired a one-man exhibition as much. It had all the intelligence and energy I had hoped to find in the man.

The comic-strip paintings stood

out, and I still think of them as his most brilliant work. Seeing them in the flesh was, of course, the essential thing. Pictures that are themselves more or less reproductions do not reproduce well. Here were frames and cropped images from comic strips translated into large paintings, coarse printing of skillfully but quickly drawn and coloured narrative scenes subtly redesigned and redrawn to become modern history paintings. War and peace, romantic bliss and romantic pain — scenes at once ordinary and irresistible: firm and clear, as though they were stills from a film directed by Hiroshige, the great Japanese printmaker. Lichtenstein's technique was perfect for his purposes. He had found a way of imitating the dots of newspaper by painting through per-

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Working up a lava

CINEMA
Richard Williams

THE handful of really good films about post-war Los Angeles, from *In A Lonely Place* through *Chinatown* to *Internal Affairs*, use an underlying awareness of the city's geological instability as a metaphor for a general moral uncertainty. From Malibu's slide area to the San Andreas Fault, the ground is always moving under the characters' feet. No such substantial richness bothers the makers of *Volcano*, a disaster movie that settles for a one-dimensional view of the most significant city of our time.

But movies like this cannot exist without a new angle on urban catastrophe. And when the tectonic plates start shifting beneath MacArthur Park, something unexpected happens. Instead of toppling tall buildings, the disturbance encourages a river of molten lava to pour through the fissure. It finds an outlet in the newly excavated subway, generating heat that fries unfortunate tunnel workers to a crisp and creating enough pressure to send manhole covers plinking skywards like champagne corks.

Into the breach leaps Mike Roark of the Office of Emergency Management, wielding not much more than Tommy Lee Jones's best cynical smile as two female geologists deliver a crash-course in basic seismology. "Lava?" he responds with a genial sneer. "Here in LA?"

Mick Jackson, the TV-trained British director, experienced a Hollywood disaster of his own earlier in the decade with *LA Story*, a catastrophically self-satisfied comedy starring Steve Martin. His commercial credibility was re-established with *The Bodyguard*, but the devastation visited on some of the city's prime real estate and most famous landmarks during the course of *Volcano* may be seen as \$70 million worth of revenge for the failure of his first attempt at local colour.

Most of the budget goes into various forms of destruction. Office blocks and art galleries explode, fireballs streak across the sky, palm trees collapse in showers of sparks, the La Brea tar pits boil over, mannequins in a bridal shop window meet a fiery death, and an all-terrain vehicle melts helplessly in the devouring tide.

"All hell is breaking loose," someone shouts as the screen shudders with the percussive roar of the earthquake and the orange river flows. But the moral lessons go largely unexplored, except when the lava passes the front door of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, where a banner advertises an exhibition devoted to a great Dutch painter. "This Hieronymus Bosch, he's heavy," a fireman remarks as he staggers away from the building, carrying a painting in his gift frame.

"That," a colleague gasps as they try to outrun the lava, "is because he deals with man's inclination to sin in defiance of God's will."

Otherwise Jerome Armstrong's script relies on topical references and local gags to provide relief from the relentless schematics. "Oh, great," Mark Fuhrman, says a black man, arrested by a shaven-headed white cop. "The lights are out in San Francisco," someone says in the emergency control centre, earning the instant rebuke: "Who gives a shit about San Francisco?" When white volcanic ash starts to drift down, a policeman observes that cars are stalling on the freeway because their air filters are

clogging. "Chevettes, right?" another cop mutters.

Jones, as the only name actor, has to carry an enormous weight. But the fact that the role makes no demands on his talent, beyond the burden of trying to make various absurd stunts look remotely believable, doesn't seem to bother him, which leads even an admirer to suspect that he might be in danger of taking dispassionate professionalism — of the sort espoused by the late Robert Mitchum — too far. One difference is that when Mitchum could find no depth in a part, he let us see a bit of himself instead. Jones seems to lack that inner resource. And, like Harrison Ford, he is too ready a victim of Hollywood's disaster for substance.

But it has to be admitted that, in terms of a Saturday night at the movies, little can hold back the unstoppable momentum of modern Hollywood values.

GOODNESS knows what Hong Kong's new rulers are making of Jackie Chan's *First Strike*, the latest instalment of the stuntman-superstar's Police Story series, laid out by the director, Stanley Tong, on a template formed from handy bits of old James Bond movies.

Chan, who looks like the missing Osmond brother, but moves like Bruce Lee, has a charm that overrides chaotic plotting, minimal char-

acterisation and slipshod dubbing, to such an extent that people normally averse to anything involving spies or martial arts may find themselves giggling at the ingenious antics of a hero who refuses to take himself seriously. First Strike rattles along at a decent lick, incorporating a couple of miraculous action sequences that justify what appears to be a sublime indifference to its own technical shortcomings.

Chan's mission, fashionably enough, is to retrieve a stolen nuclear warhead hidden somewhere in the Ukraine, before moving off to a mountain setting which provides an immediate excuse for chase sequences involving skis and snowmobiles. Operating on behalf of the CIA and the Russian FSB ("the new, improved KGB"), he follows the warhead to Australia, where he confronts two favourite species of Bond opponents, sharks and giant ginger-haired Russian killers, and indulges in the hallowed pastime of landing a sports car on the deck of a pleasure boat. Any doubts about his pretensions are removed when he drops his trousers to reveal a pair of koala-bear underpants.

All his qualities of wit and agility are brought together in a brilliantly choreographed warehouse fight. Whirling a builder's ladder around his head, he displays a balletic speed and deftness, and a broad, self-mocking humour that leaves his audience winded with laughter.

He is so like

Two thumbs good...

... four thumbs a masterpiece? **Stuart Jeffries** on how postmodernism has led to the death of serious criticism

WE DON'T need critics. Or at least not very much. Today there is no time for, or point in, reading lengthy appraisals of a work of art. What we need instead is a really good graphic of a thumb. The designers could come up with something very attractive. The critic's role would be reduced to coming back from the show, holding up a thumb or pointing it downwards. This would be converted into graphic form and appear on the arts page next to the title of the film, play or recital. What we don't need any more is the subspecies of journalist that goes out of the office to see something and tries to explain why it gives pleasure or pain.

With certain critics, and certain newspapers, this philistine revolution has already taken place: the American film critics Siskel and Ebert, for example, have only one mode of approval, which litter the advertisements in the New York Times each Sunday. "Two thumbs up!" is their praise; it represents not criticism as we have known it, but grunting, which we hoped we had evolved beyond.

Once we had William Hazlitt and Joseph Addison; soon we will have journalists who go to plays and write about how they met the lead backstage. The reasons critics give for liking or loathing works of art are increasingly seen as irrelevant. Worse, the range of reactions they offer when they evaluate some work of art or cultural product have shrunk to two poles: good or bad. Criticism is offered less and less scope for what was seen, at least in Britain, as its fundamental purpose — eloquent discrimination.

The American philosopher Nelson Goodman once wrote a paper about the overvaluation of value. He believed that the incessant ranking of works of art was identical to understanding the things that are being ranked, as the critic becomes chiefly a person who says *yes* or *no*, rather than one who helps us to understand *why*.

Two things seem to have happened. First, the reader's attention span has shrunk, whatever the subject; or, if not that, it has shrunk where criticism is concerned; or, if not that, newspapers and magazines

mann *lieder*, are at one level consumer durables as much as cars, and can increasingly be evaluated in similar ways. A performance by the Kirov Ballet, by contrast, is a fleeting, singular thing that, tradition suggests, can only be caught in the butterfly net of the critic's thought. It is not, nor never will be, confused with a fridge.

It is not just whether a performance is live or recorded that determines whether a critical evaluation can be reduced to a graphic thumb. Popular art forms, such as film or pop gigs, surrender themselves more readily to this attenuated assessment; more slowly does the shadow of the thumb creep over theatre or painting. Perhaps because books were among the first aesthetic products to be critically evaluated, litcrit has acquired both a history and a snobbery. So books resist being reduced to commodities, even though they are consumer durables as much as fridges or CDs, and appear in reviews with their prices attached.

Newspaper criticism is not a monolithic entity: television drama is not reviewed in the same way as live drama, for instance; nor is it reviewed at the same time. TV reviews appear the morning after the broadcast; the latest art show at the Tate is generally reviewed before it opens. (Of all forms of newspaper criticism, TV reviewing is the most bizarre: television is a medium rather than an art form, and yet the way in which it is consumed can serve to flatten the differences between the different kinds of programme — drama, documentary, news, etc. — that one is watching.)

What is in the process of dying — or at least being marginalised into irrelevance — is the notion that the critic should affect the way you experience a work of art. Thus, the British philosopher Malcolm Budd, in his book *Values Of Art* writes: "Criticism, in its attempt to establish a work's artistic value, will draw attention to the aesthetic and also the non-aesthetic characteristics upon which its value depends. Since convincing criticism changes or refines your interpretation of a work, and what you are aware of in it, and since these are integral to the way you experience it, it is to them, at the very least, that the task of keeping that culture greased has historically been assigned. The health and hence the future of our culture rests in the hands of hacks..." If this is true, it cannot be enough for the hacks to be merely hysterical hyperbolists, championing rubbish and becoming the obliging publicists of works of art they truly despise. Criticism is at its worst when it is riven by bad faith. To his credit, this trend appals Adair.

But Adair is equally concerned about the undervaluation of value. He cites a review by the noted film critic, Anthony Lane, in the New Yorker. Assessing the merits of the Pamela Anderson film *Barb Wire*, Lane wrote: "The true sadness of this picture is that it remains utterly featureless," adding, culpably: "I don't mind that it's rubbish." Adair sees in this last sentence the terminal disarray, the defection of intellectual duty, endemic to contemporary criticism. And he has a point: But while there are problems

with criticism, Adair misdiagnoses them. Lane's remark is not simple-minded but, rather, witting cynicism. It is an example of the late, stale fruit of postmodernism: value, in the postmodernist project, was to be abolished, or at least shoved into the critical unconscious, partly as a reaction to the perceived conservatism of distinctions between high and low culture. Postmodernism thus became celebrated as liberating, democratising. At least, that was the theory.

But one result of postmodernism is a refusal to engage with the work critically (except, chiefly, as a source of jokes). In its stead comes a pose of affectlessness, that nothing could move this critic to revulsion or adoration. It's the cynicism that governs much journalism, and this is as hierarchical as the style of criticism that preceded it: one has to be in a privileged position, cut off from the rest of society, to waste one's life watching rubbish and not care that one is doing so.

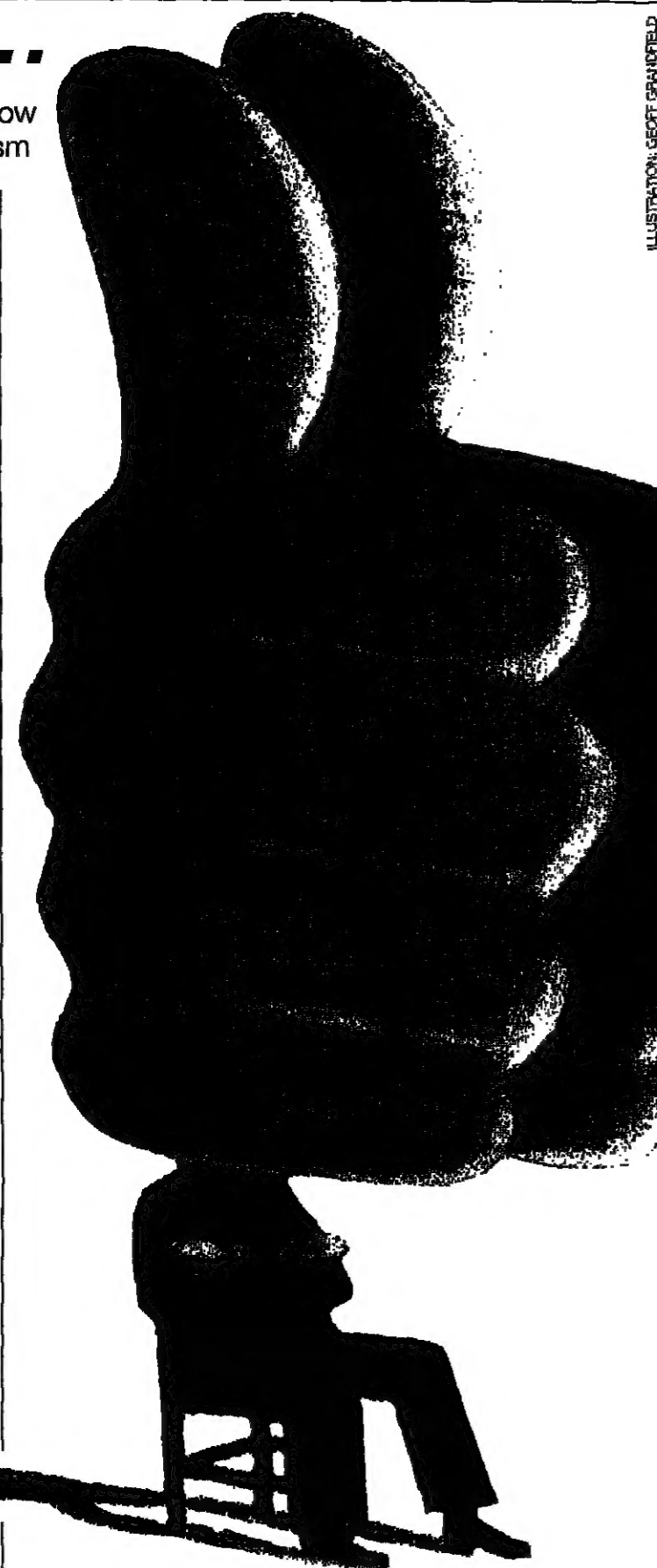


ILLUSTRATION: GEOFF SPANIELLO

Lane also represents another worrying trend: that talk about art (or at least Pamela Anderson) is more interesting, and more profound, than the subject of that talk. In an earlier collection, *The Postmodernist Always Rings Twice*, Adair distinguished between art and culture — the former was the thing itself, the latter the much more speculating business of chatting about it. In traditional aesthetics, there's what is known as the acquaintance principle, which amounts to the seemingly minimal requirement that one should have experienced a work of art before one is competent to judge its merits. What Adair seemed to have detected is not low-grade criticism but chat about cultural products that often is based on second-hand opinion.

While *Barb Wire* is undoubtedly "utterly featureless", chat about it can be fun, even rewarding, not least because it is the province of self-regarding, self-reflexive chatter — a mafia of cultural writers who write for themselves. Either way, though, this culture abjures that all thing, criticism.

Perhaps there was some justification for a postmodernist attack on the conservative canon of art and the elitism of much criticism. Terry Eagleton, in *The Function Of Criticism*, wrote of the birth of modern criticism in England, that led to, among other things, Addison's *Spectator* magazine: "The ferocious contentions of essayists and pamphleteers took place within the gradual crystallisation of an increasingly self-confident ruling bloc in English society, which defined the limits of the effectively sayable." Outside the sayable were the rest of us, effectively silenced by the hierarchy of value. This, surely, extends to how pop music and film have been received: popular culture, for want of a better term, was laughed into silence, not tracts of aesthetic experience go unnoticed unworthy of attention.

But if postmodernism can be seen as an egalitarian project, it can also, in terms of how it has been manipulated, be regarded as the home of valuelessness, affectlessness and cynicism. The Addisonian elite has been replaced by an even less worthy ruling bloc of self-regarding writers who, swollen with pride and freebies, do not deign to do the best work of critical evaluation.

One of the results of this corruption was a conference at London's Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1990, in which a clutch of anxious postmodernists attempted to rediscover value. Some speakers saw in the loss of value a response to the ugliness of our times; others, a loss of hope (or which is the same thing) critical sense — another voice of privilege, another tyranny. What has become all but unsayable now is that a work of art is moving: the prevailing mood is either affectless or hyperbolic. In the latter case, perhaps, it is a sign of the times, but it is exceptionally in praise of not moving.

But none of these responses is good enough. Art isn't like bridges. It should give us higher pleasures, including those that enable us to prove the way we live our lives, to them a spiritual dimension. This may sound like an ancient, stale hope, but surely it is time to restate it and so argue against critical collapse — into something that deserves the thumbs-down below.

The answer in Lane's case, sadly, is no. I say sadly because there is a good book to be written about the importance of basketball to black American culture, in particular the disgraceful fact that even in 1997 the game represents just about the only hope of escape from the misery of the ghetto for many young black Americans. Unfortunately for Lee and his publishers such a book was written in 1976 by Rick Telander, whose evocative, beautifully written *Heaven Is A Playground* charted a year in the lives of aspirant players on basketball courts around New York City.

The trick was repeated in *Hoop Dreams*, the magnificent 1995 documentary which followed two high school students as they tried to break into the professional game. There were claims of Hollywood racism when the film failed to be nominated for an Oscar, and rightly so. It is difficult to imagine a similar outcry when Lee's book fails to win

Authentic revolutionary with a true aim

Guy Evans

Companero: The Life and Death of Che Guevara
by Jorge Castañeda
Bloomsbury 444pp £20

IN CARACAS at the end of his motorcycle journey around the Americas, the young Che Guevara met an old freedom fighter. "You," the old man warned, "will die with your fist clenched and your jaw tense, the perfect manifestation of hatred and struggle."

And so it turned out. Fifteen years later, the young man who wrote "I see myself being sacrificed to the authentic revolution" would be executed in a small, squalid classroom in La Higuera, Bolivia. As photographs were taken to prove that the commandante was dead, a handkerchief was wrapped around his jaw to cover up the disfigurement of death. Later, his hands were cut off. By that time, in 1969, Guevara was a legend, and his iconic status makes it a tricky job for any biographer to disentangle the man from the myth.

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna was born into an Argentine blue-blood family on June 14, 1928. He was a sickly child and, aged two, suffered his first asthma attack, a complaint that was to plague him his whole life, and was perhaps, as Castañeda outlines, a powerful influence on his character. To compensate, the young Guevara developed extraordinary strength of will. In a letter to his parents years later, he would write: "A willpower that I have polished with the care of my whole life, even more intriguing is the suggestion that Guevara may have been literally an adrenaline junkie. Adrenaline prevents asthma attacks, an explanation perhaps of why the guerrilla leader would be less ill in the heat of a campaign. He only survived the messy Bolivian expedition through regular injections of Novocaine. All this, thinks Castañeda, added to Guevara's hatred of wavering and inaction, which is associated with sickness. The solution? "To flee contradiction."

The final piece of the puzzle in the making of a revolutionary fell into place in his early 20s. As a boy, Guevara had a map of Spain on his bedroom wall to follow the battles of the Spanish Civil War. After qualifying as a doctor in Buenos Aires, he left on the motorcycle trip that would lead to permanent exile. Along the way, he tended Peruvian lepers and talked politics with Venezuelan miners. By the end of the trip, his politicisation, albeit on an emotional level, was complete. It was a modern utopianism: guerrilla struggle would create a new man with moral and economic incentives, and bring about international socialism through solidarity with the Soviet Union. His ideology would remain this simple, many say simplistic, to the end.

All that remained was to pick the battle. After imprisonment in Mexico for his role in an insurrection against Batista (Guevara was the only prisoner to attempt converting his jailers to Marxism), he alighted on Cuba — "It is worth dying on a beach for such a noble idea." From here, the story is familiar: the triumphant entry into Havana in January 1959, his extraordinary contribution to the final invasion —



Great game... Che Guevara, putting, and Fidel Castro playing golf in 1961. This picture comes from a large exhibition of Che photographs at the London Institute Gallery (until October 31) PHOTO: ALBERTO FORDA

a 300km trip through bad roads, enduring thirst, hunger and enemy fire. The cult of Che was born.

The very characteristics that made Guevara such a fine revolutionary were not such a bonus in administration. He soon began to condemn the Soviets and criticise Castro. The naivety that had led him to embrace the Soviet Union was now distancing him from it. By 1964, he had been marginalised. It was no surprise, then, that he returned to guerrilla missions, first in the Congo and then on to the inevitable disaster in Bolivia. All this is told with great authority by Castañeda, a Latin American political scientist with a gift for compressing heavy geopolitics and theory into absorbable prose.

While exceptional in its sketch of Guevara the revolutionary, the book is far weaker on Guevara the man. His widow, Aleida, whom Castañeda calls "legendarily possessive", refused to co-operate, so there are no quotes from personal records or writings. Admittedly, Guevara was a

man in whom "the sense of the big picture as opposed to the personal" was strong, but none-the-less it is a serious omission and makes the book's second half a dry read.

By 1968, Guevara was seriously ill, disillusioned and close to defeat. In October, he was captured and executed. Within months, his image, famously captured by Korda — eyes fixed on a distant horizon, hair blowing, head erect — was seen at Columbia sit-ins and held aloft in Prague to exorcise the tanks from the streets. Guevara was the last gasp of the revolutionary ideal as an act of sheer will — the perfect icon for a generation whose slogan was "We want the world and we want it now". Castañeda's verdict is that Guevara "was destined, like so few others in this time, to die the death he wished and live the life he dreamt" — in which lies both his tragedy and enduring appeal.

If you would like to order this book at the special price of £16, contact CultureShop (see page 37)

about the world beyond basketball then he's keeping it to himself. Jordan makes several appearances in the book, including an "in-depth" interview with Lee which could have been written by the lowliest sports reporter. More successful is Lee's encounter with Woody Allen, where his fellow director recalls a basketball scene he cut from *Annie Hall* in which the Knicks side were pitted against a team of intellectuals ("Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, myself... people who couldn't do anything until they had thought it to death. Everything had to be debated").

Allen is a Knicks fan of even longer standing than Lee, but his cameo provides only temporary respite from dreary basketball statistics and the worries of millionaire sports fans. "I'm paying six hundred bucks for four seats," says Allen at one point. "I'm paying two grand for two," says a sympathetic Lee. "Right but you're sitting right there." But still, you've got great seats also. "It would make you weep, wouldn't it? Not with them, but at them."

THE continued ban on video release of the film means that we should still be scared by it. We might find it laughable these days. But personally, I doubt it — even looking at the stills in this book gives me the willies. It's nice to have the mythology behind the film explained: how they managed the levitations, the reviving head, the subliminal frames. Funny to think that the possessed child's mother was based on Shirley MacLaine.

Paperbacks

Nicholas Lezard

The Inferno of Dante, trans Robert Pinsky (Dent, £12.99)

IT IS nice to see that people are still making an effort at translating the immortal Dante; and that the efforts seem to be getting better. Pinsky's is very good indeed, and the confidence that allows this to be a parallel text is not misplaced. I'm not sure that this is the best translation I've seen — that honour goes, in my book, to Allen Mandelbaum, who did the entire *Commedia* for Everyman; but then Mandelbaum doesn't quite manage to reproduce the rhyme scheme as faithfully as Pinsky. It's swings and roundabouts, really. Get both. Or learn Renaissance Italian. It's not that hard, honest.

Selected Letters, by Gustave Flaubert, trans and int Geoffrey Wall (Penguin, £9.99)

SINCE somebody at Faber decided, some years ago, to let their two-volume edition of Francis Steegmüller's translation go out of print, this less comprehensive selection will have to do. It's not bad, though, and if some of the phrases are more stony than Steegmüller's, Harvard-endorsed versions, Wall's at least read fluently. It's terrific stuff. At the age of 30, he wrote, "I am about to join the ranks of the men that whomes winter at, when it comes to shagging." He also wrote much more salubrious letters to his mum. I wonder if he ever got the envelopes mixed up.

The Ummate Insult, compiled by Maria Leach (Michael O'Mara, £5.99)

A RATHER cheaply and defiantly uncanonical collection of slag-offs including real corks. H.L. Mencken: "Perhaps the most revolting character that the United States ever produced was the Christian businessman." Anon: "When Jimmy Carter gave a fireside chat, the fire went out." Norm Van Brocklin: "If I ever needed a brain transplant, I'd choose a sports writer because I'd want a brain that had never been used."

Edward de Bono's Textbook of Wisdom (Penguin, £7.99)

THIS book contains some of the most mindless rubbish I've ever been privileged to hear from an adult. (If they'd called it *"De Bono's Textbook of Riskable Platitudes"*, that would have been fine.) I won't quote any because cleaning vomit from computer keyboards is nasty, time-consuming work. Just trust me when I say that you will become wiser if you gently smear your nose against any section of this newspaper — adverts included. No correspondence, please.

The Exorcist, by Mark Kermode (BFI Modern Classics, £7.99)

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Celebrities challenged

Lawrence Donegan

Best Seat In The House
by Spike Lee, with Ralph Wiley
Fourth Estate 327pp £9.99

THE celebrity sporting memoir is a rarity in publishing — a small mercy for which we can all be grateful. Would the world really be a happier place if Jimmy Tarbuck's *My Lifetime On The Links* ever saw the light of day? Or David Mellor's gritty insight into modern-day football, *The View From The Comfort Of The Directors' Box*? The same question might be asked about *Best Seat In The House*, a ghost-written autobiography by Spike Lee in which the film director charts his life, from childhood to the making of *Malcolm X*, through his devotion to basketball and, specifically, to his hometown team, the New York Knicks.

The answer in Lee's case, sadly, is no. I say sadly because there is a good book to be written about the importance of basketball to black American culture, in particular the disgraceful fact that even in 1997 the game represents just about the only hope of escape from the misery of the ghetto for many young black Americans. Unfortunately for Lee and his publishers such a book was written in 1976 by Rick Telander, whose evocative, beautifully written *Heaven Is A Playground* charted a year in the lives of aspirant players on basketball courts around New York City.

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the Pulitzer Prize for sports-writing.

Best Seat In The House fails for many reasons, but mostly precisely because it is written from the best seat in the house, the \$1,000-a-pop court-side seats at Madison Square Garden from where Lee and his fellow celebrities — Woody Allen and John McEnroe to name but two — watch the Knicks. Lee makes strenuous (and, frankly, embarrassing) efforts to connect with the "ordinary" fan but can't escape the fact that he is a rich man writing about his well-upholstered hobby.

It is an immutable rule of sports-writing that the best books are written from, or about, the underbelly, where the pulse of the game and its participants can best be taken. Even so there ought to have been some insights to be had from the \$1,000 seats. Lee's celebrity gives him access to the game's biggest stars, including Michael Jordan (with whom the director made a series of ads for Nike), but if he has learned anything about what motivates them or what they think

about the world beyond basketball then he's keeping it to himself.

Jordan makes several appearances in the book, including an "in-depth" interview with Lee which could have been written by the lowliest sports reporter. More successful is Lee's encounter with Woody Allen, where his fellow director recalls a basketball scene he cut from *Annie Hall* in which the Knicks side were pitted against a team of intellectuals ("Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, myself... people who couldn't do anything until they had thought it to death. Everything had to be debated").

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